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Quattro forme di enciclopedia ovvero le metamorfosi dell'albero

Aprendo un dizionario della lingua italiana (per esempio il Devoto-Oli), si trova questa definizione di "enciclopedia":

Ampia pubblicazione che si prefigge di raccogliere e trattare ordinatamente e per quanto possibile esaurientemente le cognizioni relative alle scienze e alle arti nel loro complesso, o limitatamente a uno o più determinati campi dello scibile. . . .

La definizione sembra corrispondere abbastanza bene al concetto editoriale che oggi abbiamo di enciclopedia, sia essa l'*Enciclopedia Treccani* o una enciclopedia "professionale," di agraria o di scienze giuridiche. Ma lo stesso dizionario aggiunge subito dopo una definizione che si riferisce alla accezione "arcaica" del termine:

Sistema completo di cognizioni che tenda ad abbracciare l'intero scibile o si limiti a campi e argomenti specifici . . .

aggiungendo una definizione del termine medievale *encyclopaedia*, come erratamente tradotto dal greco *enkyklios paideia*, e cioè educazione circolare, e quindi completa (che è poi una definizione derivata da Plinio il Vecchio).

Diciamo subito che è l'accezione arcaica che qui ci interessa, perché è la più moderna. Essa ripropone ancora oggi la domanda sulle possibilità d'unificazione del sapere. L'enciclopedia, in questo senso, è dunque l'idea regolativa (che può dar luogo sia a una ipotesi di ricerca, a un tentativo di costruzione, o alla dimostrazione della sua impossibilità teorica o pratica) di un sistema e di un quadro che unifichi tutte le conoscenze di una determinata epoca. Di questa utopia le enciclopedie editoriali sono naturalmente delle pallide approssimazioni, talora delle parodie. Più spesso sono dei semplici vocabolari che chiariscono il significato immediato e ristretto di un dato termine senza preoccuparsi di stabilire connessioni o di individuare contraddizioni.

Quella che qui ci interessa è l'idea detta "araldica" di enciclopedia perché essa è nel contempo la sua idea *forte*. La linea forte-debole stabilisce ovviamente un continuum di possibilità di cui l'estremo più debole è il dizionarietto a uso del turista, mentre il massimo della forza si identifica con una idea della mente divina simile a quella descritta da Dante nel *Paradiso*, XXXIII, 85-87:

Nel suo profondo vidi che s'interna
legato con amore in un volume
ciò che per l'universo si squaderna

Il che equivale a dire che l'idea fortissima di enciclopedia presuppone l'esistenza di un dio onnisciente, ed onnisciente circa un universo che egli stesso ha ordinato secondo ragione. Per cui, come ci si appressa ai limiti estremi del continuum forte-debole, da un lato abbiamo una metafisica della Rappresentazione Adeguata (il mondo è complesso ma ordinato e noi abbiamo la possibilità di conoscerlo e rappresentarlo nella sua complessità e nel suo ordine) e dall'altro una sorta di empirismo radicale, di relativismo assoluto, per cui il mondo altro non è che un pulviscolo di entità non correlate e in ogni caso non correlabili, così che dell'una non si può dare definizione in termini dell'altra.

L'umanità ha giocato, in epoche diverse, su diversi concetti di enciclopedia. Volendo però elaborare alcune schematizzazioni che ci permettano di stabilire il senso che possa avere oggi per noi la nozione di enciclopedia, ci si potrà riferire a una rosa di quattro possibilità, ciascuna delle quali non corrisponde a una impresa editoriale precisa, né a una precisa posizione filosofica, ma piuttosto circoscrive, molto in generale, un atteggiamento verso l'impresa enciclopedica, un modo di avvicinarsi all'enciclopedia, o meglio ancora, un'ampia struttura soggiacente che distingue, attraverso la varietà degli esiti specifici, tre ideologie dell'enciclopedia.

a) *L'enciclopedia a cumulo*. Non si hanno idee chiare su quale sia la forma del mondo. Si accumulano tutte le informazioni a disposizione sul mondo. Siccome non si posseggono ipotesi sulla forma del mondo, non si hanno criteri per distinguere le informazioni vere da quelle false. Ma una sorta di fiducia nella verità del mondo e nella veridicità di tutte le autorità che han parlato sul mondo, incita a ritenere che ogni informazione sia vera. Questo tipo di enciclopedia, dal punto di vista dell'uomo moderno, appare come una raccolta acritica di assurdità mescolate a qualche osservazione attendibile.

b) *L'enciclopedia ad albero*. Si ha una idea precisa circa la forma del mondo. Si accumulano tutte le informazioni a disposizione e le si fanno rientrare nel quadro di questa forma del mondo. Non ci si chiede ancora se siano vere o false (secondo i criteri odierni di verificabilità scientifica) ma semplicemente se si inseriscano in qualche modo nel quadro, e vi stiano a proprio agio. Mentre la possibilità numero 1 non si pone neppure il problema della contraddittorietà delle informazioni, questa possibilità numero 2 cerca di individuare le contraddizioni e di comporle: non di eliminarle, bensì di spiegare, nei termini del quadro di riferimento, perché esse apparentemente sussistano.

c) *L'enciclopedia illuminista (albero/mappa)*. Si pronuncia una ipotesi sulla forma del mondo e ci si propone un quadro di riferimento, non necessariamente esplicito. Alla luce di questo quadro si decide quali siano le informazioni vere e quelle false, e quali le informazioni rilevanti e quali le impertinenti. Questa enciclopedia numero 3 non è meno "ideologica" delle altre due, ma presenta un tratto che la differenzia dalle altre: essa è conscia del proprio formato ideologico, ne confessa i presupposti. Di solito, proprio in virtù del progetto che la muove, essa non pretende di registrare soltanto il mondo così come è, ma si presenta come una proposta di riorganizzazione di quel mondo, già rappresentato dalla enciclopedia ad albero.

d) *L'enciclopedia semiotica (mappa/rizoma)*. Si possiede una quantità enorme di informazioni. Tutte sono verificabili non nel senso che si sappia se siano vere o false, ma nel senso che si sa come sono state prodotte: di alcune si sa che provengono da operazioni dette "scientifiche" e che quindi, nei termini della concezione odierna della scientificità, son ritenute "vere"; di altre si sa di preciso che sono immaginarie, prodotti deliberati di finzione; di altre ancora non si sa con esattezza come etichettarle dal punto di vista della verità, ma se ne riconosce l'esistenza sociale sotto forma di "opinioni" circolanti. Ma proprio in virtù dell'abbondanza e della sconnessione di queste informazioni, non si può più pretendere di organizzarle in un quadro o secondo una forma. Si postula pertanto un sistema di interrelazioni tra dati che non abbia l'aspetto di un quadro e non sia formato, ovvero non assuma l'aspetto delle forme tradizionalmente riconosciute come tali. Dato che il progetto enciclopedico prevede che in qualche modo i dati siano correlati, una organizzazione ci dovrà pur essere. Ma questa enciclopedia elabora una sua idea di *organizzazione disorganizzata*, o di forma informe, o di pluralità e coesistenza delle forme. Natural-

mente, l'abbondanza stessa dei dati, impedisce di costruire questa enciclopedia come un oggetto finito. Essa appare piuttosto come un progetto aperto: non una utopia come *terminus ad quem*, e cioè uno stato di perfezione da raggiungere, ma una utopia come idea regolativa, come progetto *ante quem*, la cui forza è data proprio dal fatto che esso *non può e non deve* essere realizzato in modo definitivo.

Ci pare che il fare e pensare enciclopedia, nel corso dei secoli, si sia mosso tra queste quattro possibilità.

1. La prima forma, il *cumulo*.

In periodo ellenistico, tra la crisi del paganesimo, l'apparizione di nuovi culti, i primi tentativi di organizzazione teologica del cristianesimo, appaiono le enciclopedie a cumulo, il cui modello sopravviverà per tutto il medio evo e anche dopo. Esempio tipico di questa enciclopedia è il *Physiologus*, composto in greco in ambiente siriano o egiziano tra il II e il IV secolo d.C., e poi tradotto e parafrasato in latino (oltre che in etiopico, in armeno, in siriano). Dal *Fisiologo* derivano tutti i bestiari medievali e per tutta l'età media le enciclopedie si ispirarono a questa fonte.

Il *Fisiologo* non ha logica: ha, si direbbe, una retorica. Nel senso in cui, per Aristotele, l'argomentazione retorica doveva partire da premesse probabili, e una premessa era probabile in quanto rappresentava una opinione corrente, condivisa dai più. Il *Fisiologo* raccoglie tutto quello che è stato detto intorno agli animali veri o presunti. Si potrebbe pensare che parla con proprietà di quelli noti al suo autore, e con incontrollata fantasia di quelli che egli conobbe per sentito dire, in una parola che sia preciso circa la cornacchia e impreciso circa l'unicorno. Invece è preciso, quando ad analisi delle proprietà, rispetto a entrambi, e inattendibile in entrambi i casi. Il *Fisiologo* non stabilisce differenze tra il noto e l'ignoto. Tutto è noto in quanto alcune lontane autorità ne hanno parlato, e tutto è ignoto perché fonte di meravigliose scoperte, e chiave di volta di recondite armonie.

La verità è che il *Fisiologo* ha una sua idea della forma del mondo, per quanto vaga: tutti gli esseri del creato parlano di Dio. Pertanto ogni animale deve essere visto, nella sua forma e nei suoi comportamenti, come simbolo di una realtà superiore:

I ricci hanno la forma di una palla e sono tutti ricoperti di aculei. Il *Fisiologo* ha detto del riccio che si arrampica sulla vite e va dove c'è l'uva, e getta per terra i chicchi e vi si rotola sopra, e i chicchi si conficcano nei suoi aculei, ed esso li porta ai figli lasciando il tralcio spoglio.

Perché al riccio viene attribuita questa bizzarra abitudine? Per trarne una acconcia spiegazione morale: il fedele deve rimanere aggrappato alla Vite spirituale senza permettere che lo spirito del male vi si arrampichi e lo renda spoglio di ogni grappolo. È ovvio che un altro animale, in luogo del riccio, potrebbe assolvere allo stesso compito simbolico. Le altre enciclopedie posteriori che, sul modello del *Fisiologo*, descrivono animali reali e fantastici, complicano questo gioco di riferimenti simbolici, sino ad entrare in mutua contraddizione; ma sopravvivono altre enciclopedie che non esitano a registrare sensi contraddittori. Il leone può essere sia simbolo di Gesù che simbolo del diavolo. In quanto nasconde con la coda le tracce che lascia sulla polvere per ingannare i cacciatori, è simbolo di redenzione dai peccati; in quanto risuscita col suo fiato il leoncino nato morto, entro il terzo giorno, è simbolo della risurrezione; ma in quanto Sansone e Davide lottano contro un leone di cui aprono le mascelle, è simbolo della gola dell'Inferno, e il Salmo 21 canta appunto "*salva me de ore leonis*." Chi deciderà quale sia la retta interpretazione dell'animale-segno in un determinato contesto? "*L'auctoritas*," rispondono gli enciclopedisti medievali, la tradizione, le analisi già condotte dai padri e dai dottori.

Così l'enciclopedia a cumulo, appunto, *accumula*, e lo fa anche quando pare organizzare la sua selva di informazioni secondo un disegno. Nel VII secolo le *Etimologie* di Isidoro di Siviglia appaiono suddivise in capitoli, ma il criterio che regge la suddivisione è del tutto occasionale. L'inizio pare ispirato alla divisione delle arti (grammatica, dialettica, retorica, matematica, musica, astronomia) ma poi segue, al di fuori del Trivio e del Quadrivio, la medicina, quindi si passa a considerare la legge e i tempi, i libri e gli uffici ecclesiastici, Dio e gli angeli, la chiesa, le lingue, i rapporti di parentela, i vocaboli strani, l'uomo e i mostri, gli animali, le parti del mondo, gli edifici, i campi, le pietre e i metalli, l'agricoltura, la guerra e i giochi, le navi, i vestiti, gli strumenti domestici e rustici. La divisione è chiaramente disorganica e fa venire in mente la ormai classica tassonomia impropria di Borges:

gli animali si dividono in (a) appartenenti all'imperatore, (b) imbalsamati, (c) addomesticati, (d) maiolini di latte, (e) sirene, (f) favolosi, (g) cani in libertà, (h) inclusi nella presente classificazione, (i) che si agitano follemente, (j) innumerevoli, (k) disegnati con un pennello finissimo di pelo di cammello, (l) *et coetera*, (m) che fanno l'amore, (n) che da lontano sembrano mosche . . .

e se le suddivisioni di Isidoro sembrano più ragionevoli di quelle di Borges, si veda poi come a loro volta si suddividono: perché mai nel capitolo su navi, edifici e vestiti devono apparire i paragrafi sui

mosaici, e sulla pittura; e perché la parte sugli animali deve dividersi in Bestie, Animali piccoli, Serpenti, Vermi, Pesci, Uccelli e Piccoli animali alati?

L'enciclopedia a cumulo appartiene a un'epoca che non ha ancora trovato una immagine definitiva del mondo; per questo l'enciclopedista raccoglie, enumera, addiziona, spinto soltanto dalla curiosità e da una sorta di umiltà antiquaria. L'enciclopedia a cumulo ha questo di comune con l'enciclopedia semiotica: è fedele a quanto è stato già detto.

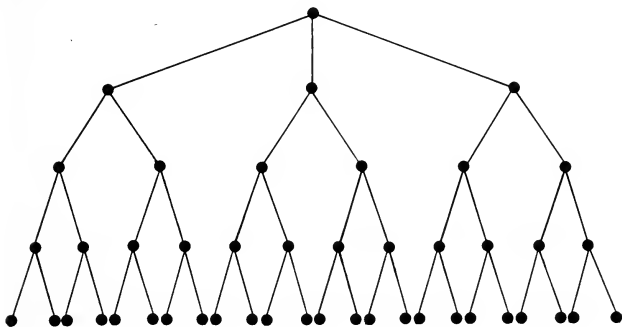
2. La seconda forma, l'enciclopedia ad albero.

La seconda forma, ancora medievale, almeno alle origini, nasce da una ipotesi più precisa, seppure del tutto astratta e teorica, sul sistema del sapere. Un modello del genere potrebbe essere, nel XIII secolo, il triplice *Speculum Mundi* di Vincenzo di Beauvais (*Speculum Doctrinale, Historiale, Naturale*), che ha già l'organizzazione di una Summa scolastica. La *Summa theologiae* di Tommaso d'Aquino ha una struttura ferrea, è un albero (gerarchizzato nei suoi rami principali e nelle loro derivazioni), con la radice all'in su, che parte da Dio come causa esemplare, e in se stesso e nelle sue creature, rispetto a cui appare come causa efficiente, finale e riparatrice, poi si dirama nella considerazione delle nature angeliche, del mondo e dell'uomo, e rispetto all'uomo esamina gli atti, le passioni, gli abiti e le virtù, passando poi ai misteri dell'incarnazione e ai sacramenti come strumento continuo di rendenzione, per terminare ai novissimi come vestibolo della vita eterna. Dove le fronde estreme riconducono per così dire alla radice, l'intero universo è suddiviso dall'essere perfettissimo sino ai meno perfetti, ma in modo che la suddivisione anziché una gerarchia statica rappresentsi anche un itinerario, a Dio come origine a Dio come fine. In questo albero tutti i problemi minori trovano il loro posto, e nulla può apparire in mutua contraddizione, tutto deve comporsi in un disegno omogeneo. Anche se Vincenzo di Beauvais era dotato di minor originalità speculativa di quanto non fosse il dottore d'Aquino, il suo *Speculum* rivela una pari energia classificatrice.

Si veda l'indice dello *Speculum naturale*: qui la suddivisione non è ispirata a un criterio filosofico o a una tassonomia statica, ma a una scansione storica, che segue i giorni della creazione: primo giorno il Creatore, il mondo sensibile, la luce; secondo giorno il firmamento e i cieli; e così via, per arrivare agli animali, alla formazione del corpo umano e alla storia dell'uomo.

In queste enciclopedie lo schematismo agisce da riduttore sulla ricchezza delle informazioni (e molti dati leggendari vengono

lasciati cadere), ma garantisce che le informazioni non entrino in contraddizione reciproca. Molte enciclopedie rinascimentali e barocche sono della stessa natura. Struttura portante di queste enciclopedie è l'indice, e l'indice, come si è detto, è *ad albero*. Al massimo si tratterà di trovare una logica sempre più sottile dell'albero, come farà Raimondo Lullo (e come tenterà in misura più astratta di fare Leibniz), attraverso l'elaborazione di un'*arte combinatoria* che, prevedendo e generando tutte le combinazioni possibili, permetta una rappresentazione sempre più perfettamente gerarchizzata e sempre più esaustiva. Queste enciclopedie sono a modo proprio dei cervelli elettronici *ante litteram*, e procedono come i cervelli elettronici detti digitali, per disgiunzioni binarie. Il modello, semplificando all'estremo, è il seguente:

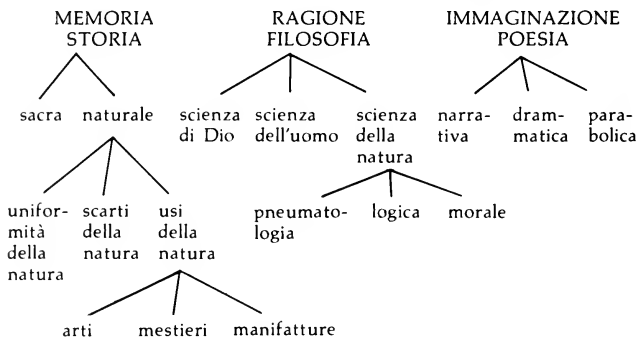


3. La terza forma, l'enciclopedia illuminista. Dall'albero alla mappa.

L'enciclopedia di terza forma non è necessariamente diversa, quanto a struttura gerarchica, da quella ad albero di seconda forma. Ciò che la differenzia è in primo luogo la confessa natura ipotetica dell'albero: esso non riproduce una presunta struttura del mondo, ma si presenta come la soluzione più economica per affrontare e risolvere un certo problema di riunificazione del sapere; in secondo luogo l'enciclopedia sa che l'albero organizza ma impoverisce, e si ripromette di individuare quanto più può i percorsi intermedi tra i vari nodi dell'albero, così che a poco a poco esso si trasformi in una carta geografica ovvero in una *mappa*. Ora una mappa non è un albero: la carta d'Italia non stabilisce nessuna priorità tra Torino e Milano, traccia solo un reticolo di connessioni (strade, fiumi, ferrovie) tra i nodi principali, ma lascia libero l'occhio o il viaggiatore, di partire da Torino per andare a Milano o viceversa.

Non solo, ma anche se rappresenta Bologna più importante (come nodo di strade o come grandezza) di Rimini o di Arezzo, non impedisce a chi sia interessato al tragitto Rimini-Arezzo di percorrerlo senza triangolare su Bologna (perché Bologna non è essenziale alla definizione delle altre due città, non si pone come principio generativo del tragitto Rimini-Arezzo).

Il modello dell'enciclopedia illuministica si regge, è vero, su una sorta di falsariga ad albero, più o meno di questo tipo:



Ma d'Alembert, nel Discorso preliminare all'*Enciclopedia*, mentre forniva informazioni sui criteri di organizzazione dell'opera, che peraltro non potevano essere visibili, a causa della riorganizzazione alfabetica (e in questo l'enciclopedia di terzo tipo si distingue da quello di secondo tipo, ed è da un lato meno immediatamente repressiva, dall'altro più sottilmente ideologica) sviluppa da un lato la metafora dell'albero e dall'altra la mette in questione, parlando invece di "mappamondo":

... non ci resta che formare un albero genealogico e enciclopedico. ... Spiegheremo in un momento l'uso che intendiamo fare di quest'albero: il farlo, invece, non è senza difficoltà. ... Il sistema generale delle scienze e delle arti è una specie di labirinto, di cammino tortuoso che lo spirito affronta senza troppo conoscere la strada da seguire. ... Ma questo disordine, per quanto filosofico sia per la mente, sfigurerebbe, o almeno annienterebbe del tutto un albero enciclopedico nel quale lo si volesse rappresentare. D'altra parte, come già abbiamo rilevato a proposito della logica, la maggior parte delle scienze che consideriamo come racchiudenti in sé i principi di tutte le altre, e che per questa ragione devono occupare il primo posto nell'ordine enciclopedico, non tengono il primo posto nell'ordine genealogico delle idee, perché non sono state inventate per prime. ... Infine il sistema delle nostre conoscenze è composto di diverse branche, di cui molte hanno uno stesso punto di riunione; e poiché

partendo da questo punto non è possibile imboccare contemporaneamente tutte la vie, la determinazione della scelta risale alla natura dei diversi spiriti. . . . La stessa cosa non avviene invece per l'ordine enciclopedico delle nostre conoscenze. Quest'ultimo consiste nel riunirle nel più breve spazio possibile, e nel porre, per così dire, il filosofo al di sopra di questo vasto labirinto, in un punto di vista molto elevato da dove gli sia possibile scorgere contemporaneamente la scienza e le arti principali; vedere con un sol colpo d'occhio gli oggetti delle sue speculazioni e le operazioni che può fare su questi oggetti; distinguere le branche generali delle conoscenze umane, i punti che le separano o che le accomunano, e intravede persino, a volte, le vie segrete che le riuniscono. È una specie di mappamondo che deve mostrare i principali paesi, la loro posizione e le loro vicendevoli dipendenze, il cammino in linea retta che v'è dall'uno all'altro; cammino spesso interrotto da mille ostacoli, che non possono essere noti in ciascun paese che agli abitanti e ai viaggiatori, e che non potrebbero essere mostrati che in carte particolari molto minute.

Queste carte particolari saranno i diversi articoli della Enciclopedia, e l'albero o sistema figurato ne sarà il mappamondo. Ma, come nelle carte generali del globo da noi abitato, gli oggetti sono più o meno accostati tra loro, e presentano un colpo d'occhio diverso a seconda del punto di vista da cui si è posto il geografo che costruisce la carta, così pure la forma dell'albero enciclopedico dipenderà dal punto di vista da cui ci porremo per guardare l'universo della cultura. Si possono dunque immaginare tanti diversi sistemi della conoscenza umana quanto mappamondi di diverse propiazioni. . . .

Spesso un oggetto che, per una delle sue proprietà, è stato messo in una classe, appartiene a un'altra classe per altre sue proprietà ed avrebbe potuto esservi posto altrettanto bene. Necessariamente, dunque, la divisione generale mantiene dell'arbitrario. . . .

Segue poi l'esposizione del criterio seguito e dell'albero adottato: denunciato chiaramente come arbitrario. Come se, si suggerisse, dato che il mappamondo (o il globo) andava percorso, gli autori si fossero fatti un itinerario, consci di non esaurire con questo le possibilità di esplorazione e i tragitti che la natura del globo consente.

Queste pagine di D'Alembert fanno qualcosa di più che introdurre il lettore allo spirito dell'enciclopedia illuminista (di terzo tipo): di fatto preludono alla discussione dei problemi che debbono necessariamente portare alla enciclopedia di quarto tipo. Infatti in esse si disegna con estrema chiarezza l'idea che il sistema enciclopedico *non abbia centro*.

4. La quarta forma, l'enciclopedia semiotica. Dalla mappa al rizoma.

La quarta forma di enciclopedia non costituisce né un oggetto né un progetto editoriale. Ovvero, costituisce la totalità dei progetti editoriali. Ciò significa che la quarta forma di enciclopedia è già

scritta, è in corso di scrittura, sarà scritta, ma nessuno può proporsi di scriverla. Essa si identifica con la biblioteca delle biblioteche. Se ce ne occupiamo in questa sede è perché il termine "enciclopedia" è oggi usato come preciso concetto della semantica (e della semiotica in generale) ed è usato nel modo in cui diremo proprio perché è entrata in crisi una nozione di enciclopedia a albero.

Il problema nasce nelle discussioni contemporanee di semantica quando si tratta di costruire un codice, ovvero un sistema di equivalenze che facciano corrispondere a delle espressioni fisiche (parole, od altri segni in sistemi semiotici non verbali) una data porzione di contenuto (o significato).

Un dizionario bilingue associa a termini di una lingua A, termini di una lingua B. Così facendo non spiega il significato dei termini dell'una o dell'altra lingua, se non ricorrendo al più elementare e discutibile dei criteri semantici, la sinonimia: / cane / in italiano è sinonimo di "chien" in francese.

Un vocabolario di una lingua invece costituisce un dato termine non solo con sinonimi, ma anche con definizioni: / cane / significa "mammifero domestico dei carnivori, onnivoro, con odorato eccellente, pelame folto di vario colore, pupilla rotonda, dimensioni, forma del muso e attitudini variabili secondo la razza." Così per esempio lo Zingarelli. E se si limitasse a questo, il vocabolario sarebbe abbastanza insufficiente. Per esempio mi direbbe cos'è un cane secondo la zoologia (mammifero carnivoro) ma non mi insegnerebbe a riconoscere un cane. In effetti, il vocabolario citato aggiunge delle informazioni visive e cioè una serie di illustrazioni che mostrano trenta tipi di cani diversi. Così facendo evita di specificare verbalmente alcune proprietà di questi animali, per esempio che hanno quattro gambe, una coda, eccetera. In più il vocabolario aggiunge alcune espressioni fatte, brevi frasi, nomi composti (come / cane da pagliaio /, / mangiare come un cane /) che costituiscono esempi di uso linguistico e aiutano in qualche modo a circoscrivere meglio il significato del termine in questione.

La semantica strutturale contemporanea ha stabilito che il significato di una espressione debba essere analizzato in unità semantiche elementari, dette anche "semi," ovvero *proprietà*, e le varie teorie auspicano o propongono (sempre in modo ancora insoddisfacente) che questi semi siano organizzati in qualche modo, dai più generali ai più specifici, e possano dar ragione di tutti i possibili usi linguistici del termine. In altre parole, si auspica una *semiotica componenziale* (che analizza cioè le componenti semantiche, ovvero i semi, del semema corrispondente a un dato termine — il semema altro non essendo che lo spettro organizzato di tutte le

proprietà o semi) che serva come sistema o serie di istruzioni per inserire correttamente il termine nei contesti appropriati.

Infatti l'analisi in proprietà semantiche dovrebbe permetterci di riconoscere le espressioni semanticamente ben formate da quelle semanticamente devianti. Supponiamo che un termine, per esempio /scapolo/ (per prendere uno degli esempi più trattati dalla logica, dalla filosofia del linguaggio e della semantica dell'ultimo secolo) possa essere analizzato in queste proprietà semantiche elementari: *uomo, maschio, adulto, non sposato*.

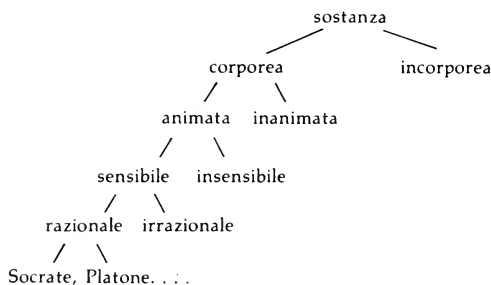
Ecco che questo sistema di proprietà permetterebbe di riconoscere come semanticamente deviante la frase "la madre di Luigi è scapolo," che violerebbe regole di amalgama tra /madre/ e /scapolo/ dato che /madre/ dovrebbe essere analizzato come "uomo, femmina, adulta" (non è necessario che una madre sia sposata. . . .) Due proprietà di /madre/ non si amalgamerebbero con due proprietà di /scapolo/.

Se fosse possibile analizzare tutti i termini in un numero così ridotto di proprietà, non esisterebbero problemi per una semantica componenziale (così come non esisterebbero per un cervello elettronico capace di tradurre da una lingua a un'altra o di formulare parafrasi di espressioni linguistiche). Ma il problema sorge quando ci si trovi di fronte a una frase come: "quello scapolo ha tre gambe." Dovremmo dire che poiché uno scapolo è "uomo" (e postulando che anche le proprietà semantiche siano a loro volta analizzabili semanticamente) e gli uomini hanno la proprietà di avere due gambe, la frase in questione è semanticamente anomala.

Ma ci si avvede subito di un inconveniente. Che uno scapolo sia uomo adulto e non sposato non è tanto una "verità" naturale, quanto una convenzione semantica, o meglio un postulato di significato. Nell'accettare il codice di una data lingua si decide di usare il termine /scapolo/ solo per gli essere umani, adulti e non sposati. Una volta presa questa decisione sarà scorretto usare /scapolo/ per una donna (che sarà piuttosto /nubile/) o per un bambino (visto che /scapolo/ viene scelto per indicare la condizione di non sposato di un adulto, e nessuno chiamerebbe scapolo un bambino se non per scherzare o per indicare con una figura retorica il fatto che, ovviamente, i bambini non possono sposarsi — salvo condizioni particolari in civiltà o periodi storici specifici). Che invece un uomo abbia due gambe sembra una verità *di fatto*. E come tutte le verità di fatto può essere negata o sospesa: niente vieta che con la frase "quello scapolo ha tre gambe" io voglia indicare un essere umano abnorme, un fenomeno da baraccone, che peraltro rimane pur sempre un essere umano. Così, tornando all'esempio di /cane/, sembra difficile (dati i postulati di significato

posti dalla moderna zoologia) dire "quel cane non è un mammifero" mentre sembra possibile dire "quel cane non ha la coda" oppure "quel cane ha solo tre gambe."

La differenza è di tipo logico. In una gerarchia di postulati di significato il cane è inserito necessariamente nella classe dei carnivori e questi nella classe dei mammiferi, così che è impossibile che un animale sia cane senza essere carnivoro e mammifero. Questa relazione, per cui "se cane allora necessariamente mammifero" e "se questo animale non è un mammifero allora non può essere un cane" viene chiamata relazione di *entailment*, o come si usa ora tradurre in italiano, di *implicitazione*. L'implicitazione riguarda un insieme gerarchizzato di proprietà. La forma di questa gerarchia è ad albero, tanto è vero che trae la sua origine dal cosiddetto "albero di Porfirio," dovuto al filosofo neoplatonico del III secolo d.C. e commentatore di Aristotele. Porfirio organizza l'intero universo attraverso una scala o una struttura arborescente che procede per incassamento da genere a specie:



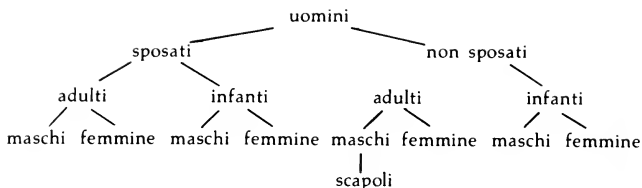
Si vede facilmente che la relazione che lega i nodi inferiori dell'albero e quelli superiori è una relazione di *entailment* o implicitazione. Se Platone, allora sostanza razionale, se razionale allora sostanza animata, e così via. Non si può dire di Platone (o di un uomo in genere) che sia sostanza razionale ma non sia animato.

Ora una semantica fondata solo su relazioni di *entailment* ha la possibilità di predire quali frasi siano ben formate e quali no, ma si trova a dover maneggiare solo poche proprietà, ciascuna delle quali rappresenta la classe generale entro cui rientra la proprietà sottostante. Cioè una semantica basata sull'*entailment* può dire che tutti gli scapoli sono non sposati e che non possono esserci degli sposati che sono scapoli, così come può dire che non possono esserci cani

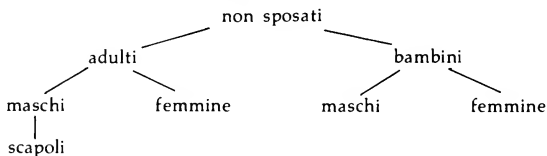
che non siano mammiferi, ma non può analizzare nei propri termini espressioni come "ho visto un cane che miagolava" o "non permetterò che mia figlia vada sola di sera a casa di uno scapolo." Infatti la prima frase presume, per essere giudicata in termini di correttezza semantica, che si sappia che i cani hanno la proprietà di abbaiare e che la proprietà di miagolare è tipica dei gatti; e la seconda prevede una serie di nozioni che chiameremo "sociali" sui rapporti di convenienza e sul fatto che di solito gli scapoli abitano soli, sono sospettati di condurre vita più libera degli uomini maritati, eccetera eccetera — naturalmente nell'ambito di una capacità di comprendere le espressioni linguistiche (e il principio vale anche per i segni non verbali, sia pure in modi diversi) dipende proprio dalla nostra conoscenza di queste proprietà più o meno "accidentali" e non "necessarie" e dall'intero sistema delle convenzioni dette extralinguistiche nell'ambito delle quali i termini linguistici vengono usati e si caricano di senso.

Ora vi è una corrente della semantica contemporanea che asserisce che l'analisi semica può essere fatta solo in termini di *dizionario*, e cioè ascrivendo a una data espressione le proprietà strettamente linguistiche; tutto il resto appartiene al sistema della conoscenza empirica e non fa parte di un dizionario, bensì di una *enciclopedia*. E siccome la rappresentazione enciclopedica è potenzialmente infinita, non può costituire una base ragionevole per le rappresentazioni semantiche. Quale è la differenza tra dizionario ed enciclopedia? Su questo argomento sono stati spesi fiumi di inchiostro ma ci pare che la linea di discriminare tra i due concetti stia proprio nella relazione di *entailment*. Un dizionario in senso stretto deve solo tener conto dei termini impliciti. Nella definizione citata dallo Zingarelli, un cane è mammifero e carnivoro (e quindi per successive implicazioni, animale ed essere organico) in virtù di postulati dizionariali di significato, mentre è solo in base a una conoscenza enciclopedica che ha odorato eccellente o pupilla rotonda (perché non si vede perché di fatto non possa esistere un cane con pupilla anormale e privo di odorato, mentre non ci può essere un cane che non sia mammifero).

Se è così, molte teorie che pretendono di fornire rappresentazioni semantiche in forma di dizionario, di fatto non rispettano i requisiti logici di un dizionario: e si veda proprio l'esempio, così abbondantemente fornito in molti testi, di / scapolo /. Infatti questo termine non può essere inserito in un solo albero di Porfirio che tenga conto delle quattro proprietà "uomo, maschio, adulto e non sposato." Se infatti la relazione discendente da generale a specifico è rappresentata come



uomo scapolo è necessariamente adulto maschio uomo e non sposato, ma non è vero che ogni maschio sia non sposato, come si vede dal diagramma. Né le cose cambierebbero se il diagramma fosse organizzato come segue:



perché in tal caso tutti gli scapoli sarebbero necessariamente maschi adulti non sposati, ma non sarebbero necessariamente adulti tutti i maschi. Il che ci fa ricordare le parole di D'Alembert: che cioè gli alberi e le rappresentazioni gerarchizzate intervengono per dare un certo ordine alla varietà di una mappa, la quale però potrebbe supportare, da altri punti di vista, altri ordini e altri alberi. Infatti uno dei problemi discussi dai teorici di una semantica dizionariale è quali delle marche implicate vengano negate della negazione della espressione implicitante. Cosa significa dire "colui non è scapolo"? Soltanto che non è sposato o anche che non è maschio, umano e adulto? Il buon senso ci dice che la risposta è data solo dal contesto. Se indicando un uomo dico "quell'uomo è scapolo" e il mio interlocutore mi risponde "no, non è scapolo," egli certamente intende dire che è sposato, senza con ciò negare che sia maschio, umano e adulto. In tal caso sia io che il mio interlocutore ci rifacciamo a un albero di Porfirio molto ridotto che, nell'universo degli uomini maschi adulti, distingue i non sposati dagli sposati. Se invece indicando un punk che danza in una discoteca dico "quello è scapolo" e il mio interlocutore dice "no, non è scapolo," può darsi che voglia intendere che colui non è un maschio, bensì una femmina fantasiosamente travestita. Ma in tal caso il contesto avrebbe in qualche modo specificato che siamo interessati a distinguere, nell'universo degli esseri umani in genere, i maschi dalle femmine. D'altra parte se, di un'ombra nella notte, dico che non è un cane, voglio dire che può essere un gatto, che non è un mammi-

fero ma un uccellaccio, o addirittura che non è un animale ma una pietra? Una semantica in forma di dizionario non può concepire un dizionario assoluto e imm modificabile, ma adatta le sue rappresentazioni dizionariali, e le gerarchizza, a seconda dei contesti.

Una volta però che si è accettato l'idea che le rappresentazioni semantiche dipendono dai contesti, l'idea di dizionario (che esibiva una certa purezza meccanica e sembrava adatto a costruire automi dotati di competenza semantica) crolla, e diventa più utile l'idea di enciclopedia. *Salvo che una enciclopedia non può essere gerarchizzata ad albero.* Si considerino le due frasi "non permetterò mai che mia figlia vada sola di sera a casa di uno scapolo" e "figlia mia, coltivati il signor Giuseppe perché è scapolo." Nel primo caso il parlante associa al termine / scapolo / una proprietà negativa, nel secondo una proprietà positiva. Quando è che uno scapolo è raccomandabile e quando non lo è? Una enciclopedia deve tener conto di tutte le definizioni, anche quelle contraddittorie, ovvero di tutto ciò che viene detto ed è stato detto di uno scapolo, specificando poi quali proprietà valgano in quali contesti. Si veda un termine come / balena /. Per noi oggi ha la proprietà di essere un mammifero, ma prima della zoologia moderna era considerata un pesce. Un dizionario che analizzi la balena come mammifero non mi permette di capire una quantità di testi antichi in cui la balena è vista come pesce tra i pesci. Una enciclopedia deve contenere una definizione di / balena / che consideri due *selezioni contestuali*: in contesti di tipo A è un pesce, mentre in contesti di tipo B è un mammifero. Il che sembra anche corrispondere abbastanza intuitivamente alla nozione editoriale corrente di enciclopedia, come strumento che mi fornisce le diverse eccezioni di un termine non solo secondo le leggi del lessico ma anche tenendo di vista le differenze storiche e culturali: una buona enciclopedia non mi dice solo che i cani sono mammiferi, ma che in certe religioni antiche erano venerati e in certi paesi costituiscono un cibo assai ghiotto. Solo sulla base di queste notizie enciclopediche posso capire una raffigurazione egizia del dio Annubio, o un racconto che si svolga in un ristorante di un porto asiatico dove si chiedono al cuoco dei cani.

È possibile fornire una rappresentazione strutturale di una enciclopedia semiotica di questo tipo, e vi provvedono in modi diversi la topologia e la teoria dei grafi. Ma si può accettare come buona la metafora proposta da Deleuze e Guattieri: in *Rhizome*, metafora vegetale, in cui alla radice arborescente si contrappone un viluppo, una rete di bulbi e tubercoli come "quando i ratti scivolano gli uni sugli altri."

Le caratteristiche di una struttura rizomatica sono le seguenti:

- (a) ogni punto del rizoma può essere connesso (e deve esserlo) con qualsiasi altro punto;
- (b) non ci sono punti o posizioni in un rizoma, non vi sono che delle linee;
- (c) un rizoma può essere spezzato in un punto qualsiasi, e riprende seguendo una delle proprie linee;
- (d) il rizoma è antigenealogico;
- (e) il rizoma ha sempre un proprio esterno con cui fa ugualmente rizoma;
- (f) un rizoma non è un calco ma una carta (l'orchidea non riproduce il calco della vespa, essa fa carta con la vespa in seno a un rizoma); la carta è aperta, può essere connessa con qualcos'altro in ogni sua dimensione, è smontabile, rovesciabile, suscettibile di continue modificazioni;
- (g) una rete di alberi che si aprano in ogni direzione può fare rizoma (il che, ci pare, equivale a dire che in ogni rizoma può essere artificialmente ritagliata una rete di alberi parziali);
- (h) il rizoma è acentrico e pertanto in esso le iniziative locali possono essere coordinate indipendentemente di una istanza centrale o originaria.

Forse il rizoma ha altre proprietà: ma questi accenni metaforici ci permettono di azzardare alcuni requisiti di una rappresentazione semantica in forma di enciclopedia:

a. Essa è strutturata secondo una *rete di interpretanti*, e cioè di definizioni che sostituiscono altre definizioni, di situazioni che chiariscono il senso di un termine (così come per spiegare a qualcuno il significato del segnale militare di / at-tenti! / posso mostrargli una raffigurazione di un manipolo di soldati che scattano a talloni uniti e piedi divaricati, testa alta e mani lungo la cucitura dei pantaloni), di rappresentazioni visive che spiegano espressioni verbali e viceversa (come se sotto a una raffigurazione del dio Anubi spiegassi che si tratta di una divinità egiziana), di sinonimi organizzati a catena, così che tra il primo e l'ultimo termine delle catene ogni possibile sinonimia sia scomparsa (si pensi alla catena "cosacco — militare zarista — armato al servizio di un imperatore — samurai"), eccetera. La catena degli interpretanti fa sì che tra le proprietà (variamente descritte) assegnate a una espressione linguistica (o di altro sistema semiotico) alcune appaiono mutualmente contraddittorie, e solo il contesto stabilisca quale debba essere attivata o, come si dice, topicalizzata, accordata al tema dominante del discorso.

b. Essa assume pertanto non la forma di un albero gerarchizzato, ma di una rete o di un *labirinto*. Permette vari percorsi, scelte multiple, definibili sulla base dei contesti o di precise regole testuali.

c. Essa è *potenzialmente infinita*, perché deve tener conto di tutte le proprietà che tutte le culture hanno attribuito alle varie espressioni. Essa è potenzialmente infinita perché è mobile, e i discorsi che facciamo sulla base dell'enciclopedia di fatto mettono continuamente in questione l'enciclopedia, nel senso che l'ultimo articolo scientifico di uno scienziato nucleare prevede una serie di conoscenze enciclopediche circa la struttura dell'atomo, ma ne introduce di nuove e pone in crisi alcune di quelle vecchie.

d. Essa non è preoccupata di registrare quello che "è vero" (qualunque senso si assegni a questa espressione) ma *registra invece ciò che socialmente è stato detto*, e non solo quello che è stato accettato per vero, ma anche quello che è stato accettato come immaginario. Una enciclopedia non registra solo che Napoleone è morto a Sant'Elena, ma anche che Don Rodrigo è morto di peste, almeno nel mondo immaginario di Manzoni, perché anche le notizie concernenti il mondo di Manzoni fanno parte dell'enciclopedia.

L'enciclopedia semantica quindi non è mai finita, esiste come idea regolativa: e tuttavia questa idea regolativa, che *non può* dare origine a un progetto editoriale, perché non è finita e perché non ha forma organizzabile, serve a individuare le porzioni identificabili dell'enciclopedia attuale, come riserva di sapere sociale e socializzato, nella misura in cui servono a costruire gerarchie provvisorie, o reti maneggiabili, ai fini di interpretare e di spiegare la interpretabilità di certe porzioni di discorso. Tutta la semantica degli ultimi anni tenta di lavorare intorno a questa nozione fantasma di enciclopedia, che pare l'unica adatta a spiegare l'uso naturale dei linguaggi e a spiegare perché e come noi comprendiamo le espressioni che riceviamo nel corso delle interazioni comunicative.

Questa nozione di enciclopedia non nega l'esistenza di un sapere: nega la sua organizzabilità in modo definito e permanente. Non nega che questo sapere possa essere indagato e organizzato "localmente"; nega che se ne possa dare organizzazione globale: ovvero asserisce che ogni organizzazione che si vuole globale, ignorando di essere parziale, è perciò stesso *ideologica*.

Questa enciclopedia vede le enciclopedie editoriali come sue attualizzazioni provvisorie, incomplete, parziali, buone sole per certi fini: e fatalmente ideologiche quando pretendano di essere esuasive, o identifichino l'ordine della loro organizzazione con un

ordine "oggettivo," celando i propri criteri organizzativi, e i fini che han determinato questi criteri.

Questa enciclopedia non esiste, eppure è la totalità di ciò che l'umanità ha detto, ed ha una esistenza materiale, perché questo detto è stato depositato sulla forma di altri libri, di quadri, di film, di comportamenti, di costruzioni architettoniche, di leggi, di strade. . . .

Trasformatasi da utopia della conoscenza globale (raggiungibile) in coscienza dell'impossibilità della conoscenza globale ma in sicurezza della reperibilità locale degli elementi di questa conoscenza, diventata da progetto di un libro a metodo di indagine attraverso la biblioteca generale e onnivora della cultura tutta, l'enciclopedia di quarta forma è importante proprio perché non esiste come oggetto riconoscibile. È ancora, come per Dante, ciò che per l'universo si squaderna: salvo che si tratta dell'universo della cultura e non è visibile legato in un volume. Almeno, non in uno solo.

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Dante, St. Augustine, and Astronomy*

I. *Pacem sine vespera* (*Purg.* II)

In his *Confessions*, St. Augustine both thanked God for the intelligence that had enabled him to teach himself the liberal arts:

Whatever was written, either on rhetoric, or logic, geometry, music, and arithmetic, by myself without much difficulty or any instructor, I understood . . .

and accused himself of having wasted his talent: "For what profited me good abilities, not employed to good uses?" (IV.16.30).¹ It is significant that grammar and astronomy do not appear in this list. For both grammar and rhetoric, of course, he had masters (I.14.23, III.3.6), but his reading in astronomy had actually served him to good use. It was the source of his first doubts about the truth of the Manichean mythology:

And since I had read and well remembered much of the philosophers, I compared some things of theirs with those long fables of the Manichees, and found the former more probable. . . .

The natural philosophers were in their turn, however, equally ignorant of the Creator because of their pride and curiosity:

Nor dost Thou draw near, but to the contrite in heart, nor art found by the proud, no, not though by curious skill they could number the stars and the sand, and measure the starry heavens, and track the courses of the planets. (V.2.3)²

Their detailed knowledge of the rules governing eclipses of the sun and moon told them nothing useful about their own darkness (V.3.4). Augustine finally turned his back on astronomy as a manifestation of curiosity: "nor care I to know the courses of the stars" (X.35.36). While recognizing its utility for fixing the date of Easter, he found it the least valuable branch of pagan learning for a Christian scholar, and positively dangerous because of its contamination with astrology:

Knowledge of this kind in itself, although it is not allied with any superstition, is of very little use in the treatment of the Divine Scriptures and even impedes it through fruitless study; and since it is associated with the most pernicious error of vain prediction it is more appropriate and virtuous to condemn it.³

Dante also studied astronomy. The fantastic allegory correlating the heavens with the sciences in the *Convivio* seems designed in part to display his technical knowledge of the subject. He was not entirely self-taught, however, but would have learned something of the science at the "scuole dei religiosi e . . . disputazioni dei filosofanti" that he attended.⁴ Aristotle's *De caelo et mundo*, Ptolemy's *Almagest*, perhaps even the Arabians that he cites were at that time textbooks in arts. Furthermore, as any reader of the *Commedia* knows, his ultimate decision not to finish the *Convivio* in no way meant that he had turned his back on astronomy. His method of coping with St. Augustine's strictures on the subject took a form familiar to the theologians of this time, the reconciliation of contradictory authorities. Dante did not work out the reconciliation dialectically, however, but poetically, with the techniques of narrative construction. One of the elements in his solution was the insertion of Ps. 113 into the staging of *Purgatorio* II.

Augustine was fascinated by the fact that the book of Genesis explicitly closes each of the six days of creation: "And the evening and the morning were the first day" etc., but says nothing of the sort about the seventh day.⁵ This became for him a sign of the eternity of God's rest, which is in turn the eternal rest that shall be granted unto us. St. Bonaventure gave the same anagogical interpretation of the Sabbath in his treatise *On Retracing the Arts to Theology*.⁶ The coda that ends the *Confessions* is a poetic prayer built on this exegesis:

O Lord God, give peace unto us (for Thou hast given us all things): the peace of rest, the peace of the Sabbath, which hath no evening. For all this most goodly array of things very good, having finished their courses, is to pass away, for in them there is morning and evening.

But the seventh day hath no evening, nor hath it setting; because Thou hast sanctified it to an everlasting continuance. . . . (XIII.35.50, 36.51)

The Latin prose is rhythmical: "pacem quietis, pacem sabbati, pacem sine vespera."

From the shore of the island that bears Mount Purgatory, Dante's pilgrim catches sight of the light of the angelic vessel approaching with incomparable speed:

cotal m'apparve, s'io ancor lo veggia,
 un lume per lo mar venir sí ratto,
 che 'l mover suo nessun volar pareggia. (*Purg.* II. 16-18)⁷

It is significant that the poet has inserted his own prayer for himself. The souls in the ship are singing Ps. 113, "In exitu Israel de Aegypto" (46). The relevance of that theme at this point in the poem has long been established; but the arguments include a reference to the liturgical reading of the account of the crossing of the Red Sea from the book of Exodus on Holy Saturday night, which fails to explain why Dante chose his text from the Psalms instead, and on Easter Sunday morning.⁸ We need to recall the time and place of departure for the angelic voyage. At what we may presume was a relatively short time before, these souls went on board at Ostia:

Ond'io, ch'era ora a la marina vòlto
 dove l'acqua di Tevero s'insala,
 benignamente fu' da lui ricolto. (*Purg.* II. 100-102)

Nine lines have been expended at the start of the canto to tell us that the sun is setting over Jerusalem while it is rising on the southern shore; it is evening in Italy, as Virgil will say:

Vespero è già colà dov'è sepolto
 lo corpo dentro al quale io facea ombra: (*Purg.* III. 25-26)

Like the shades in the Valley of the Princes, who will sing the hymns of Compline at nightfall, Casella and his fellow-passengers have occupied the time of their passage singing Vespers. On Easter Sunday, as on any other Sunday of the year, Vespers began with Ps. 109, "Dixit Dominus," and the sequence of psalms ended with Ps. 113. The angelic voyage has taken no longer than it takes to chant five psalms; Singleton remarks that roughly the same voyage took Ulysses over five months.⁹

The liturgical source of this first piece of real music in the *Commedia* explains the details of the performance as Dante carefully recorded them:

cantavan tutti insieme ad una voce
 con quanto di quel salmo è poscia scripto.
 Poi fece il segno lor di santa croce; (*Purg.* II. 47-49)¹⁰

The sign of the cross is the gesture that accompanied the doxology chanted at the end of each psalm in the Office. It also goes some

way toward supplying the very tune (which we do not have for Casella's song at the end of the canto); plainchant it must be, though whether the special oriental-sounding (probably cantorial) "Tonus peregrinus" to which Ps. 113 was set most Sundays in the year (unique among psalms in the week, and impressive for a layman with a musical ear), or the regular eighth Gregorian mode is not clear.¹¹ In a larger framework, Dante has underscored the fact that the astronomy of his imaginative universe enabled him to grant the souls of the dead the object of St. Augustine's prayer. By invoking angelic power to overtake the movement of the sun, he has cancelled their Sunday evening in accord with the figurative meaning of the seventh day, "pacem sine vespera." Their Vespers has become an aubade.

II. Fire and Wind (*Par.* I and *Inf.* XXXIV)

In the *Confessions*, this exegesis of the seventh day is the conclusion of an allegorical interpretation of Genesis 1, in which every single work of the six days is made over into a figure for some aspect of the Redemption. The result is that the objects of natural philosophy and astronomy return to the centre of Augustine's concern, but only from a theological perspective. Dante's representation of an Augustinian idea through the medium of his own astronomy was to that extent authorized by the Saint himself. With the Redemption as its subject, the final book of the *Confessions* is also a kind of hymn to the Holy Spirit. In the words of Fulbert Cayré, it is

une longue description, enthousiaste, souvent lyrique, des interventions de l'Esprit de Dieu dans la vie chrétienne . . . l'esprit des *Confessions*, notamment celui du livre XIII . . . est un grand amour, avivé par l'action du Saint-Esprit.¹²

As a poet of love turned theologian, Dante should have had a special interest in the third Person of the Trinity, of Whom it has often been said that His proper name is *Amor*, though not always with due notice to all the implications of that entry in the theological dictionary for the vocabulary of the *Commedia*.¹³ The objects of creation that St. Augustine turned into symbols of the Spirit on the basis of texts from Scripture fall into two classes, meteorological and astronomical. We should expect to find Dante taking advantage of the possibilities offered by the last book of the *Confessions* in both those realms.

It is clear at least that Augustine's scriptural exegesis influenced Dante's handling of the meteorology contained in the New Testament account of the Spirit's first coming on Pentecost, the double phenomenon of tongues of fire and a violent wind (Acts 2: 2-3). This influence appears, for example, in Beatrice's explanation of the pilgrim's upward movement at the outset of the *Paradiso*. In the last book of the *Confessions*, Augustine gave the Spirit another proper name (taken from Acts 2: 38):

... of Whom it is written, that He is Thy gift . . . In Thy Gift we rest; there we enjoy Thee. Our rest ("requires") is our place. Love lifts us up thither. . . .

Three examples of natural places for the elements are mentioned:

Fire tends upward, a stone downward . . . water poured upon oil, sinks below the oil. They are urged by their own weights to seek their own places. When out of their order, they are restless; restored to order, they are at rest.

But the element that is representative of the Spirit's work is fire, whose upward tendency Augustine develops with allusions to the Psalms:

We are inflamed, by Thy Gift we are kindled; and are carried upwards; we glow inwardly, and go forwards. We ascend Thy ways that be in our heart, and sing a song of degrees; we glow inwardly with Thy fire, with Thy good fire, and we go; because we go upwards to the peace of Jerusalem. . . . (XIII.9.10)

Although Beatrice's discourse is expanded with suggestions of hylemorphism and exemplarism and additional metaphors of sea travel and an arrow's flight, it starts with the Augustinian term: "Le cose tutte quante / hanno ordine tra loro" (*Par.* I. 103-104), includes the same three elements (115, 117, 137), and concludes with the element that is central to the argument, inverting the construction so as to play on the word for rest:

Maraviglia sarebbe in te, se, privo
d'impedimento, giù ti fossi assiso,
com'a terra quiète in foco vivo. (*Par.* I, 136-141)

The most curious detail of the whole speech is in fact an embellishment of the fire imagery derived from meteorology. As a form of fire that moves downward, lightning stands for perverted love:

(e sí come veder si può cadere
foco di nube), se l'impeto primo
a terra è torto da falso piacere. (*Par.* I, 133-135)

The leading *exemplum* of this phenomenon, presumably in the form of self-love, was represented on the cornice of pride:

Vedea colui che fu nobil creato
più ch'altra creatura, giù dal cielo
folgoreggiando scender da un lato. (*Purg.* XII. 25-27)

Although Lucifer is compared to lightning in the Gospels (Luc. 10:18), Dante has generalized the simile in the *Paradiso*, taking a cue from natural philosophy as well in order to improve on St. Augustine's exegesis.¹⁴

Despite the traditional meaning of the imagery, André Pézard attempted to buttress a thesis by collecting all the fires in the *Commedia* that are associated with merits and demerits of the intellect.¹⁵ In the final analysis, that line of inquiry may not be inappropriate to the works of the Holy Spirit, but there is no doubt that the fire on the last cornice of Purgatory and the wine of *Inferno* V are penalties for lust as perversion of love. The wind that blows from the bottom of Hell, violent indeed (*Inf.* XXXIV. 8-9) but without heat (XXXIII. 103-105), seems to represent, on the other hand, the loss of love. That Satan's seraphic wings should produce a mistral rather than the sirocco of Pentecost is psychologically telling, but Dante does not have to construct simple reversals of the biblical imagery in order to produce a parody. The wind that carries Paolo and Francesca about blows in a place "d'ogni luce muto" (*Inf.* V.28), where the synaesthesia does seem contrived to suggest the absence of tongues.¹⁶ The tongue of flame that speaks for Ulysses, however, trembles "pur come quella cui vento affatica" (*Inf.* XXVI. 87), and the parody is worked out at a deeper level.¹⁷

Satan's wind is the product of a blend of New and Old Testament texts that can be found in St. Augustine. In the parable of Isaias, Lucifer is a name of the King of Babylon, who falls from the north, having claimed a throne on the northern mountain of the gods derived from Phoenician mythology (Is. 14: 4-13). With their memory of the captivity in Egypt, the Jews sometimes identified this northern mountain with Sion itself (Ps. 47:3)¹⁸ Mediterranean Christians, for whom the north had no religious connotations and an unpleasant meteorology, took the prophet to mean that Lucifer fell to the north. Thus Augustine in the *Confessions* says of the proud that our Adversary

may have them for his own, not in the bands of charity, but in the bonds of punishment: who purposed to set his throne in the north, that dark and chilled ("tenebroso frigidique") they might serve him, pervertedly and crookedly imitating Thee. (X.36.59)

The faithful angelic creation "would wax dark, and chill" (XII.15.21) did it not cleave to God. This exegesis justifies both "le tenebre" (*Inf.* XXXI. 23) that envelop the giants around Dante's City of Dis and the increasing cold along the rest of the pilgrim's descent.

In one of his letters, St. Augustine actually completed his interpretation of Isaias in the same way that would be taken by Dante:

... the Devil and his angels, by turning from the light and warmth of charity, and going over to pride and envy, were benumbed as by an icy hardness. Therefore they are figuratively located in the north. . . .

For the opposite direction, he cited the south wind from the Song of Songs (Cant. 4:16) and identified it in conformity with the New Testament description of Pentecost as "the spirit of grace, breathing from the south, as from a warm and luminous quarter." The contrast is rounded out by providing a symbolic wind for Satan too:

... they were held under the Devil, as under the north wind, where they were chilled by abounding iniquity, and were, so to speak, frozen ("quodammodo congelaverant").¹⁹

III. Sun, Moon, and Stars (*Inf.* I and XX, *Purg.* XIII and XVIII)

We cannot establish the extent to which Dante also borrowed from St. Augustine's spiritual astronomy without some attention to the history of the eponymous "gifts of the Holy Spirit." It was Augustine's usual practice to correlate the seven spirits named by Isaias with the beatitudes of the Sermon on the Mount, despite all the difficulties of reducing Matthew's nine verses to seven, distinguishing synonyms in the prophet's list and reversing their order, since "the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom."²⁰ St. Thomas was able to maintain the Augustinian correspondences of gift and beatitude, precisely since he did not regard either list as a set of fundamental principles. The moral part of the *Summa Theologiae* is organized around the seven virtues, to each of which Aquinas attached one or more gifts of the Spirit (or none at all), the gift in every case carrying with it the beatitude that Augustine

had assigned, without much trace of the original difficulties. Thomas followed the same procedure in distributing the seven capital vices singly or in pairs as psychology required, rather than matching one with each virtue.

Dante secured his own degree of freedom by reconstructing the list of beatitudes so that they could be matched with the capital sins, as was required by the novel composition of traditional elements in his representation of Purgatory. Pézard remarked that the gifts of the Holy Spirit nevertheless cannot be found on the cornices of the mountain, despite the weight of authority by which they should accompany the beatitudes and even some medieval systems that correlated them with the capital sins.²¹ It is also difficult to find a system of virtues implied by the vices purged on the mountain; Dante seems to have taken a lesson from Aquinas's indifference to any one-to-one correspondence between virtues and vices.²² There is scriptural authority, however, for numbering the virtues themselves among the gifts of the Spirit: "the work of the virtues" (the Vulgate "operatio virtutum") appears in St. Paul's enumeration of "spiritual gifts" at I Cor. 12:10. To the extent that all the virtues are infused, St. Thomas admitted that they have the same origin as the gifts; the difference is that one set of habits disposes its recipient to respond to the promptings of reason, the other to the promptings of God.²³ These abstract schemes could leave us with the paradoxical impression that the gifts of the Holy Spirit are nowhere represented in the *Commedia*, save by the biblical seven candlesticks of *Purgatorio* XXIX.

The matter appears under a different light when we return to the last book of the *Confessions*. Although St. Augustine's allegory of Genesis 1 runs up against its own difficulties in detail, his choice of a figure for the gifts of the Spirit has definite poetic advantages. To begin with, the heavenly bodies that God created on the fourth day blend easily with the New Testament description of Pentecost:

For behold God saying, as it were, Let there be lights in the firmament of heaven; there came suddenly a sound from heaven, as it had been the rushing of a mighty wind, and there appeared cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And there were made lights in the firmament of heaven, having the word of life. (XIII.19.25)

The astronomical imagery also supports a significant contraction of the list of names from Isaias. In his treatise *On the Trinity*, Augustine stressed the distinction between two perfections of reason, "sapientia" and "scientia": the knowledge of eternal and invisible things derived from contemplation, and the knowledge of

temporal and visible things, useful for action. Although science by itself is both useless and pernicious (as in the case of the natural philosophers), the two kinds of knowledge are perfectly united in Christ (Col. 2: 2-3) through the inspiration of the Spirit, and thereby distributed to the Christian community.²⁴ In the *Confessions* this economy is expressed by the sun and the moon as figures for the gifts of wisdom and knowledge, while at the same time, the great variety of charisms enumerated by St. Paul is reflected in the multiplicity of stars:

For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom, as it were the greater light, for the sake of those who enjoy the light of perspicuous truth, as it were for the rule of the day ("in principio diei"). To another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit, as it were the lesser light: to another faith; to another the gift of healing; to another the works of the virtues ("operationes virtutum"); to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another divers kinds of tongues. And all these as it were stars (XIII.18.23)

The Latin vocabulary of this passage indicates that Augustine was using older translations of Genesis and the Epistles, but for the virtues, there is little difference from the Vulgate.²⁵

Dante evidently took his convention of representing the virtues as stars from St. Augustine's allegory, adding his own flourish again by grouping them into novel constellations to signify the division between cardinal and theological virtues.²⁶ At the same time, he invoked a familiar constellation as a metaphor for his most obvious representation of the gifts of the Holy Spirit by calling the seven candlesticks that lead the Pageant of Scripture "il settentrion del primo cielo" (*Purg.* XXX. 1). In the preceding canto, however, the biblical image was developed in such a way as to implicate the whole of Augustine's figurative astronomy. By fusing the lamps and the rainbow of Apoc. 4: 3-5, the poet self-consciously spread the flames of his "candelabri" (*Purg.* XXIX. 50) to the point that they took on the role of illuminating the firmament: "Sotto così bel ciel com' io diviso . . ." (82). First, their altitude was emphasized: "Di sopra fiammeggiava il bello arnese" (52), "l'alte cose" (58); then they were named "vive luci" (62), echoing Augustine's "luminaria in firmamento caeli verbum vitae habentia"; and finally, they were associated with the sun and the moon:

e vidi le fiammelle andar davante,
 lasciando dietro a sé l'aere dipinto,
 e di tratti pennelli avean sembiante;
 s' che l'í sopra rimanea distinto
 di sette liste, tutte in quei colori
 onde fa l'arco il Sole e Delia il cinto. (*Purg.* XXIX. 72-78)

The literal point of the reference is the seven colours, another embellishment, but one for which the solar rainbow would suffice. The moon is not only superfluous but also inadequate as an example of spectral effects.²⁷ Dante seems to intend the further suggestion that the lights of the gifts can be organized as a suite of radiances from the sun and the moon.

A variety of meanings can be validly attached to the sun and the moon in the *Commedia*; commentators often cite the *Convivio* to the effect that the sun is eminently suited to represent God, while the poet clearly intends something else when the pilgrim addresses Virgil: "O sol che sani ogne vista turbata" (*Inf.* XI. 91)²⁸ Singleton favours the "sol iustitiae" that is suggested by a number of biblical texts, including the second half of Ps. 18, "Caeli enarrant gloriam Dei."²⁹ St. Augustine actually intercalated the words of that psalm in his allegory for the gifts of wisdom and knowledge, since its third verse links the night with "scientia":

. . . shine yet in the firmament, that *the heavens may declare His glory*, dividing between the light of the perfect, though not as the angels, and the darkness of the little ones, though not despised. Shine over the earth; and *let the day*, lightened by the sun, *utter unto day, speech of wisdom*; and *night*, shining with the moon, *show unto night, the word of knowledge*. (XIII.19.25)

We should therefore consider the possibility that Dante also intended the sun and the moon to represent these two gifts of the Spirit.

The sun is mentioned three times in *Inferno* I, in a ritual manner that is also embodied in the triple adverbs and the pair of triple confessions of fear. In the first instance, it is not named:

guardai in alto e vidi le sue spalle
 vestite già de' raggi del pianeta
 che mena dritto altrui per ogne calle. (16-18)

In the second instance, it is both named and associated with a constellation of stars:

Temp' era dal principio del mattino,
e'l sol montava 'n sù con quelle stelle
ch'eran con lui quando l'amor divino
mosse di prima quelle cose belle (37-40)

Dante refers to Genesis 1 astronomically: it is spring, the season of creation, "la dolce stagione" (43). Aristotle's prime mover is in fact the divine Love; the pilgrim is facing "quella fiera a la gaetta pelle" (42), for the older commentators a figure of lust or perverted love. Both these mentions of the sun allude vaguely to the attributes of Wisdom in the sapiential books, especially Proverbs 8:31-32:

I was at his side, a master-workman, my delight increasing with each day, as I made play before him all the while; made play in this world of dust, with the sons of Adam for my play-fellows. Listen to me, then, you that are my sons, that follow, to your happiness, in the paths I shew you. . . .

But since those texts were variously applied to the second Person of the Trinity, to Christ incarnate, to the angels, to the Virgin Mary and to theology, that does not tell us very much. At least the theological tradition distinguished two senses of "wisdom:" created and uncreated (Ecclus. 1 and 24, Prov. 8: 22-25); one meaning of created wisdom is the gift of the Spirit.³⁰

The mention that is third in numerical order is also the most specific. Dante defines his "selva oscura" by the absence of sunlight, with a synaesthetic expression that should be interpreted by means of its rhyme in the tercet:

tal mi fece la bestia sanza pace,
che, venendomi 'ncontro, a poco a poco
mi ripigneva là dove 'l sol tace. (*Inf.* I. 58-60)

English translators usually call the beast "restless," but given the medieval tendency to systematize the "fruits of the spirit" (Gal. 5:22), we should recognize "pace" as a technical term.³¹ Virgil's prophecy of the wolf's return "ne lo 'nferno, là onde 'nvidia prima dipartilla" (*Inf.* I. 110-111) suggests a reference to the cornice of envy, where we find Madonna Sapia's pun on her own name:

Savia non fui, avvegna che Sapia
fossi chiamata, e fui de li altrui danni
più lieta assai che di ventura mia. (*Purg.* XIII. 109-111)

St. Thomas recognized her fault as a possible consequence of envy: "ex tristitia de bono proximi, quae est invidia, sequitur exultatio de

malo eiusdem."³² Dante has changed the wording ("laetitia de damnis alterium") but has copied the Saint's system, in which the vice of envy is opposed to the virtue of charity, which is perfected by the gift of wisdom. Aquinas also followed Augustine in linking "Beati pacifici" with the gift of wisdom, which might explain how the "bestia senza pace" reminded the poet of the silence of the sun.

Dante in fact displays the sun quite prominently on the cornice of the envious. At the beginning, it is again Virgil's only guide "per lo novo cammin" (*Purg.* XIII. 16), addressed with a pagan prayer that nevertheless makes its point three times: "tu ne conduci . . . condur . . . duci" (17-21). At the end, it is evening and they have; turned west, so that the sun is shining directly into their faces:

E i raggi ne ferien per mezzo 'l naso . . .

quand' io senti' a me gravar la fronte
a lo splendore assai più che di prima,
e stupor m'eran le cose non conte (*Purg.* XV.7:10-12)

Almost blinded, Dante cannot identify the brighter light until it is revealed as the angel of the cornice, who invites them upward with the words "Beati misericordes" (34-38). St. Thomas defined "mercy" as both a passion (the contrary of Madonna Sapia's, "*dolor de miseria aliena*") and a virtue. Dante's ranking of the two splendours is a transcription of Aquinas's argument that mercy as a virtue has special characteristics above and beyond "joy" and "peace," although all three are consequences of the virtue of charity.³³ That Dante should jump to a different beatitude than the blessing of peace traditionally associated with the gift of wisdom has been justified in concrete imagery by his first impression that the brighter splendour was a reflection of the original one, explained with six self-conscious lines of optics (*Purg.* XV. 16-21).

In general, by having one angel outrace the sun and another outshine it, Dante has followed St. Augustine's notion that that celestial body, even though it is "the light of the perfect," does not surpass the light of the angels that God divided from the darkness on the first day of creation (XIII.10.11, 19.25). As regards our darkness, the poet takes pains to set the moon over the "selva oscura" in place of the sun, as we are told by Virgil's gratuitous remark when he tells the time at one point in Hell:

e già iernotte fu la luna tonda:
ben ten de' ricordar, ché non ti nocque
alcuna volta per la selva fonda. (*Inf.* XX. 127-129)

That the opening canto of the *Commedia* said nothing of this moon is of course a crux. St. Augustine found the gift of knowledge especially appropriate to the catechumen, only partly initiated into the Church:

But the natural man, as it were a babe in Christ and fed on milk, until he be strengthened for solid meat and his eye be enabled to behold the Sun, let him not dwell in a night forsaken of all light ("desertam"), but be content with the light of the moon and the stars. (XIII.18.23)

On the Augustinian premise, the pilgrim's ignorance of the source of whatever light he enjoyed overnight can be explained by his neglect of any divine benefits whatsoever in that first stage. In one sense, he was worse off than a catechumen. The deep forest of the *Confessions* ("In hac tam immensa silva," X.35.36) was the vice of curiosity that masquerades as "scientia":

a certain vain and curious desire, veiled under the title of knowledge and learning. . . . (X.35.34) Curiosity makes semblance of a desire of knowledge whereas Thou supremely knowest all. (II.6.13)

By connecting the figures for the gift and its parody, Virgil's remark could imply that the baptized Christian overly given to the pursuit of natural knowledge is not out of reach of the gift that concerns his interests, even when he has deviated so far as to forget that fact.

Among the manifestations of curiosity, Augustine listed the magical arts and astrology (X.35.55-56), sins that are punished in this fourth bolgia. In that vein, the negative formulation of Virgil's remark suggests an allusion to the harm usually done by the malign spirits popularly associated with the full moon, themselves parodies of the Spirit. Literally, his words are a pun on the second half of Ps.120:6: "Per diem sol non uret te, neque luna per noctem." With his first mention of the sun, Dante had echoed the first verse of that psalm: "Levavi oculos meos ad montes, unde veniet auxilium mihi," the first half of which he subsequently copied into the *Paradiso* for a metaphor based on the Transfiguration (*Par* XXV. 38). Conversely, while half of the sixth verse describes the full moon over the "selva oscura," he will later apply the full verse to the shades of the "selva antica."³⁴

Again the *Purgatorio* contains specific suggestions of the influence of Augustine's allegory. At the midpoint of the mountain, Virgil discourses on that branch of pagan learning that is eminently useful for action, "moralità" (*Purg.* XVIII. 69). The pupil puts his question with a *capitatio benevolentiae*:

Maestro, il mio veder s'avviva
 sí nel tuo lume, ch'io discerno chiaro
 quanto la tua ragion parta o descriva. (*Purg.* XVIII.10-12)

As luminous as Virgil's reasoning is, it finally enjoys only the light of the gibbous moon, whose shape is given in a simile that suggests the heat of fire:

La luna, quasi a mezza notte tarda,
 facea le stelle a noi parer piú rade,
 fatta com' un secchion che tuttor arda (76-78)

Read in terms of Augustine's allegory, this time-reference would also become a statement that at its best, pagan philosophy falls short of the fullness of the Christian's spiritual gift of knowledge. Virgil has just told Dante to attend to what Beatrice will have to say about free choice (72-75), recalling his modest remark:

. . . Quanto ragion qui vede,
 dir ti poss' io; da indi in là t'aspetta
 pur a Beatrice, ch' è opra di fede. (46-48)

If the last word is not just to be taken generically, we should note that St. Thomas connected the gift of knowledge with the virtue of faith.³⁵

A more specific clue is the beatitude of this cornice, which is another crux. Since "acedia" was sometimes called "tristitia," it seems that the vice itself is blessed with "Beati qui lugent." A biographical solution has been proposed, in which Dante would intend an allusion to his mourning for the loss of Beatrice. It is well known that his consolation for that loss was philosophy. The second half of this beatitude is "quia consolabuntur," and the poet forcibly rewords the text so as to produce another pun on the title of Lady Philosophy, the "donna gentile" of the *Convivio*:

'Qui lugent' affermando esser beati,
 ch'avran di consolar l'anime donne. (*Purg.* XIX. 50-51)

Besides the reference to philosophy that Dante found in it, this beatitude is precisely the one that Augustine and Aquinas connected with the gift of knowledge.³⁶

Virgil's inadequacy is noted for the last time when all the gifts of the Spirit appear. Even the full moon is not as bright as the suite of seven lights, which goes without saying if it represents but one of the gifts, and furthermore the lesser of the dominant pair. Astro-

nomically, the moon is brightest on its fourteenth day when it crosses the meridian, where only a gibbous moon shone for Virgil's discourse. Dante formulates the point in such a way as to suggest the reduction of the full moon itself to a matter of halves:

Di sopra fiammeggiava il bello arnese
più chiaro assai che luna per sereno
di mezza notte nel suo mezzo mese. (*Purg.* XXIX. 52-54)

The splendour is so great that Virgil shares the pilgrim's stupefaction:

Io mi rivolsi d'ammirazion pieno
al buon Virgilio, ed esso mi rispuose
con vista carca di stupor non meno. (55-57)

Dante has developed St. Augustine's figurative interpretation of the moon by playing on its phases. Since the gift of knowledge concerns visible and mutable things, Augustine took the lunar phases to signify generically the changes of rites and symbols in religious history:

But the word of knowledge, wherein are contained all Sacraments, which are varied in their seasons ("temporibus") as it were the moon, and those other notices of gifts, which are reckoned up in order, as it were stars, . . . are only for the rule of the night. (XIII.18.23)

This is the difference in "ceremonial precepts" between the two Testaments that the scholastics matched with a difference in "moral precepts" also discussed by Augustine (III.7.12-14).³⁷ He assigned the gift of knowledge to the catechumens because their state of life in a way corresponds to the condition of all mankind under previous dispensations. Dante has extended the meaning of the image to include pagan philosophy, in accord with the traditional notion that it was also, like the Old Testament, a "praeparatio evangelica." But beyond that, he has drawn out the implications that only a poet could find in the selection of particular phases. The variability of the moon is emphasized most in his tale of the last voyage of Ulysses, who refused to accept the historical situation of paganism. To give the length of time that Ulysses spent on the open sea, Dante multiplied the lunar phases by the liturgical number that we mentioned above:

Cinque volte raccessò e tante casso
lo lume era di sotto da la luna,
poi che 'ntrati eravam ne l'alto passo (*Inf.* XXVI. 130-132)

It would not be an exaggeration to claim that by incorporating St. Augustine's spiritual astronomy into his poem, Dante saw to it that the gifts of the Holy Spirit would in fact be represented everywhere in the *Commedia*. They pass out of sight— but not out of mind— only when Virgil and his charge enter the mouth of Hell. They are the source of the pilgrim's joy when he glimpses once again "le cose belle/ che porta 'l ciel" (*Inf.* XXXIV. 137-138), particularly the virtues. And finally, they constitute the theological significance of the very last line of the poem.

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NOTES

* An abridged version of this paper was read at the meeting of the Canadian Society for Italian Studies during the Learned Societies Conferences in Montreal, May 26, 1980.

- 1 Quotations of the *Confessions* are in the Pusey translation, revised only where noted and compared with the Latin edition by Martin Skutella (Leipzig, 1934).
- 2 Earlier texts on curiosity and pride in the philosophers of nature include *De vera religione* 29.52 and *De moribus ecclesiae catholicae* I.21.38. Leo Ferrari studied this phase of Augustine's evolution in "Astronomy and Augustine's Break with the Manichees," *Revue des études augustiniennes*, 19 (1973), 263-76, though it is dubious that actual eclipses had much to do with it; even more dubious is his thesis that Augustine was converted to Manicheism by their interpretation of an otherwise terrifying celestial apparition in "Halley's Comet of 374 AD," *Augustiniana* 27 (1974), 139-50.
- 3 *On Christian Doctrine* II.29.46, trans. W.D. Robertson (Indianapolis, 1958), p. 66. In *Saint Augustin et la fin de la culture antique* (Paris, 1949), p. 405, H.I. Marrou weakens the force of this text; "Saint Augustin n'ose insister sur cette science"; but he has good remarks on Augustine's problems in the face of a decadent culture on pp. 351-56. Astronomy is the one liberal art left out of Augustine's plan after his conversion to write handbooks of the arts, a programme that he never completed in any case: *Retractationes* I.5.6; CSEL 36, 27-28.
- 4 *Convivio* II.xii.7, p. 185 in the second edition of the critical edition of the Società Dantesca Italiana, *Le Opere di Dante* (Firenze, 1960). The allegory of the heavens occupies two chapters, II.xiii-xiv, pp. 185-91. Thomas Bergin remarked the "compulsion to appear learned for learning's sake" that characterizes the *Convivio* in *Dante* (New York, 1965), p. 151.
- 5 I have quoted the King James version. See Augustine, *Epist.* 55.9.17, CSEL 34, 188; and *De Genesi ad litteram* IV.18.32, CSEL 28 (2), 116-18. G. Folliet in "La typologie du sabbat chez saint Augustin," *Revue des études augustiniennes*, 2 (1956), 371-90, identifies *Conf.* XIII as definitive in the evolution of Augustine's exegesis of this point, pp. 384-85.
- 6 *De reductione artium ad theologiam*, ed. and trans. Sister Emma Healy (St. Bonaventure, New York, 1955), c. 6, pp. 28-29. Astronomy is not mentioned in this work, since Bonaventure is using a commonplace blend of Aristotelian and Neoplatonic divisions of philosophy, and not the trivium and quadrivium: c. 4, pp. 22-27.
- 7 Quotations of the *Commedia* are from the critical text of the Società Dantesca Italiana, *La Commedia secondo l'antica vulgata*, a cura di Giorgio Petrocchi (Milano, 1966-67).

- 8 See Charles Singleton, "In exitu Israel de Aegypto," 78th Annual Report of the Dante Society of America (1960), reprinted in *Dante: a Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. John Freccero (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, 1965), pp. 103-12; and Dunstan Tucker, OSB, "In exitu Israel de Aegypto: the Divine Comedy in the Light of the Easter Liturgy," *American Benedictine Review*, 11 (1960), 54-56. Tucker described the Easter Vigil service on pp. 47-50, as Singleton had done in reference to *Purg. II* in *Dante Studies II: Journey to Beatrice* (Cambridge, Mass., 1958), pp. 225-27. In *Dante Alighieri, The Divine Comedy*, trans. and comm. Charles S. Singleton (Princeton, New Jersey, 1970-75), *Purgatorio* 2. *Commentary*, p. 31, he mentions only that it is Easter Sunday morning. Sinclair cited Plumptre for the use of Ps. 113 "in the last offices for the dying and in the burial of the dead" in *The Divine Comedy of Dante Alighieri*, trans. and comm. John D. Sinclair (New York, 1939), vol. 2 *Purgatorio*, pp. 41-42. Robert Hollander in *Studies in Dante* (Ravenna, 1980), p. 105, suggests that the singing is a generic echo of Col. 3:16, since the language of Col. 2 and 3 is borrowed elsewhere in this canto.
- 9 Singleton contrasts the angelic voyage with that of Ulysses on p. 29 of his commentary, which does not mention Vespers, although the "Salve Regina" and "Te lucis" of *Purg. VII-VIII* are traced to Compline on pp. 146, 159. Cf. Amilcare A. Iannucci's study of the implications of the Marian hymn in "The Nino Visconti Episode in *Purgatorio VIII* (vv. 43-84)," *La Fusta*, 3(1978), 1-8. For the texts and tunes of Sunday Vespers, see *The Liber Usualis* with introduction and rubrics in English, the Benedictions of Solesmes (Tournai, Belgium, 1934), pp. 250-56. Vespers of the Office for the Dead began with Ps. 114 (Vulgate numeration), *ibid.* p. 1772; Ps. 113 does not appear in any of its hours or in the funeral service, pp. 1763-1806.
- 10 Other places in the *Purgatorio* where we are told just how much of a biblical or liturgical text is recited: XXII, 6; XXV, 127; XXX, 83-84. It is worth noting that the angelic vessel has arrived just before the passengers would have begun the hymn:

"Lucis Creator optime,	<i>Lucem dierum proferens,</i>
Primordiis lucis novae	<i>Mundi parans originem</i>
Qui mane junctum vesperi	<i>diem vocari praecipis:</i>
Illabitur tetrum chaos,	<i>Audi preces cum fletibus.</i>
Ne mens gravata crimine,	<i>Virta sit exsul munere,</i>
Dum nil perenne cogitat,	<i>Seseque culpis illigat.</i>
Caeleste pulset ostium,	<i>Vitale tollit praemium:</i>
Vitemus omne noxium,	<i>Purgemus omne pessimum."</i>

(*The Liber Usualis*, pp. 256-57). Apart from the interesting description of Hell, Dante has punned on this text for bits of his staging of the voyage.

- 11 It was Benedictine custom in recent centuries to vary the tunes of the Vespers psalms on those Sundays that were feasts: *The Liber Usualis*, p. 782 (Easter), p. 884 (Pentecost), p. 914 (Trinity Sunday). If medieval practice did not include this variation on Easter, then Dante was alluding to the music too at *Purg. II*, 63: "... noi siam peregrin come voi siete." Music historians tell me that the name of the ancient tune reserved for Ps. 113 signified the oscillation of the melody between two (Gregorian) keys every half-verse, but surely it also embodies a hoary anonymous pun. John Freccero remarked in "Casella's Song (*Purg. II*, 112)," *Dante Studies*, 91 (1973), 76, that where Boethius called for music, Casella's song is only given in words. Hollander, *op. cit.*, p. 102, stresses that this is "a canto of two songs that stand in clear opposition to one another."
- 12 "Le livre XIII des 'Confessions'," *Revue des études augustinienes*, 2 (1956), 143, 161.
- 13 For example, by André Pézard in *Dante sous la pluie de feu* (Paris, 1950), p. 260, n. 4; and by Singleton in *Dante Studies I: Commedia, Elements of Structure* (Cambridge, Mass., 1954), p. 40. Pézard refers to St. Thomas, S.T. I, q. 37. A sign that more notice is being taken of the theme is Hollander's fully theological interpretation of *Purg. XXIV*, 52-54, in "Dante Theologus-Poeta," *Dante Studies* 94 (1976), 116-17, reprinted in *Studies in Dante*, p. 82; a number of other critics are cited in support of his thesis.

- 14 The Gospel simile is cited by Sinclair, *op. cit.*, p. 162, n. 2; by Dorothy Sayers in *The Divine Comedy, II: Purgatory* (Harmondsworth, Middlesex, 1955), p. 163; and by Singleton in his commentary, p. 246. Singleton quotes most of *Conf. XIII.9.10* in *Paradiso 2. Commentary*, pp. 30-31, but only for *Par. I. 115-120*. We should note that St. Thomas repeated St. Augustine's identification of "Donum" as a proper name of the Spirit in *S.T. I, q. 38*.
- 15 *Op. cit.*, ch. IV, "Le symbole de la flamme," pp. 283-93. On *Inf. XI* and *XV*, cf. *Conf. III.8.15-16*: "For even that same intercourse which should be between God and us is violated . . . in burning in things unallowed, to that use which is against nature."
- 16 Glauco Cambon notes, however, that the Italian word implies "blind" as well as "dumb" in "Synaesthesia in the *Divine Comedy*," *Dante Studies*, 88 (1970), 5. Another instance of the technique will be studied below (*Inf. I. 60*); Singleton notes the "merging of the visual and the auditory" at both places in *Inferno 2. Commentary*, p. 76. Cambon, pp. 6-16, found synaesthesia more frequent in the *Paradiso*; could it be the mode of insinuating the Holy Spirit in Dante's theological poetics?
- 17 Terence Logan cited Acts 2:2-3 for the tongues of flame in *Inf. XXVI* in "The Characterization of Ulysses in Homer, Virgil, and Dante," *82nd Annual Report of the Dante Society of America* (1964), 42. Giuseppe Mazzotta noted the wind as well in "Poetics of History: *Inferno XXVI*," *Diacritics*, vol. 5, no. 3 (Summer 1975), 40-41, with a general interpretation that rhetoric parodies the gift of prophecy, the speaker possessed by his language in both cases. The wind that beats Ulysses's flame is of course Virgil's conjuration (79-84), another element of parody.
- 18 See *La sainte Bible*, traduite en français sous la direction de l'Ecole biblique de Jérusalem (Paris, 1956), pp. 698, 1003. "Latera aquilonis" is the expression of the Vulgate in both Ps. 47:3 and Is. 14:13. Isaiah gives a biblical basis for Lucifer's fall to the cold part of the earth (Singleton's commentary, pp. 642-43) only from outside the Old Testament geography.
- 19 *Letters*, vol. III, pp. 103-04, trans. Sister Wilfrid Parsons in *Writings of St. Augustine*, vol. XI (New York, 1953); *Epist. 140.22.55*, CSEL 44, 201-02. Dante recapitulated the geography of both Testaments in the *Commedia*. The pilgrim comes to Heaven both from the barbarous south of Ps. 113:1, "Domus Iacob de populo barbaro" ("d'Egitto . . . in Ierusalemme," *Par. XXV. 55-56*, the canto of his examination by the apostolic namesake of the patriarch Jacob); and from the barbarian north of the early Christian centuries, identified by an elaborate astronomical periphrasis (*Par. XXXI. 31-33*). If Rome supplants Jerusalem as the figure of the celestial city, Florence takes the place of Babylon (*Par. XXXI 34-39*).
- 20 The biblical sources of this text are given in *On Christian Doctrine*, trans. W.D. Robertson, p. 38, n. 1, but neither of the necessary references to Is. 11: 1-3 and Matt. 5: 3-11. See *De doctrina Christiana*, II.7.9-11, CCL 32, 36-38; and *De sermone Domini in monte*, I.3.10-4.11, CCL 35, 3-9. The rest of my paragraph can be garnered from the table of contents for the *Summa Theologiae* II-II.
- 21 The biblical sources of this text are given in *On Christian Doctrine*, trans. W.D. Robertson, p. 38, n. 1, but neither of the necessary references to Is. 11: 1-3 and Matt. 5: 3-11. See *De doctrina Christiana* II.7.9-11, CCL 32, 36-38; and *De sermone Domini in monte*, I.3.10-4.11, CCL 35, 3-9. The rest of my paragraph can be garnered from the table of contents for the *Summa Theologiae* II-II.
- 21 *Op. cit.*, pp. 262-64.
- 22 John Mahoney noted the difficulty in "The Role of Statius and the Structure of Purgatory," *79th Annual Report of the Dante Society of America* (1961), 28. The scheme he proposes on pp. 25-31 has impossible consequences: the chief theological and cardinal virtues, charity and prudence, are reduced to opposing respectively anger (rather than pride or envy) and mere lust. There is no way to avoid matching lust and gluttony with a single virtue, temperance.
- 23 *S.T. I-II, q. 68, a. 1 c.*

- 24 *De Trinitate* XII. 14-15, XIII. 19; CCL 50, 374-80; 50a, 415-17. See Etienne Gilson, *Introduction à l'étude de saint Augustin* (Paris, 1929), pp. 146-49, for remarks on the moral ambiguity of science and the later popularity of the distinction (from his book on St. Bonaventure); "Scientia et sapientia dans la langue de saint Augustin," in Marrou, op. cit., pp. 561-69; and Goulven Madec, "Christus, scientia et sapientia nostra," *Recherches augustiniennes*, 10 (1974), 77-85. The distinction is taken up by Bonaventure in *Hexameron*, coll. VII, ed. F. Delorme (Quarrachi, 1934), pp. 212-14.
- 25 Most English translations of the *Confessions* (Watts, Pusey, Sheed, Ryan) have "the working of miracles" at this point, following the King James and other English bibles. "In principio diei" (Gen. 1:16) became "ut praesset diei" in the Vulgate; but cf. *Inf.* I. 37, quoted below for the second mention of the sun.
- 26 *Purg.* I. 22-24; VIII, 88-93. Dante did not simply devise a "star allegory" to replace a "river allegory," as Singleton put it in *Dante Studies* II, p. 176, with reference to the four rivers of Paradise as a figure for the cardinal virtues in Philo, Ambrose, and Augustine's early *De Genesi contra Manichaeos*, pp. 168-75. Though Singleton noted that Augustine later played down allegorical interpretations of Gen. 2 in *De Gen. ad litt.*, he did not avert in this chapter, pp. 159-83, to the allegory of Gen. 1 that Augustine wrote in the intervening years. For a good discussion of the constellation intended in *Purg.* XXX. 1, see his commentary, pp. 727-29.
- 27 Sayers, p. 304, and Singleton, p. 710, suggest the lunar halo, which is monochromatic; Sinclair, p. 386, mentions the rare lunar rainbow, which is seldom bright enough to produce the entire spectrum. The most precise scriptural references for the imagery are given by Singleton, pp. 706-710, though he simply repeats Isaias for its subsequent development.
- 28 The text of the *Convivio* is cited by Freccero, "Dante's Firm Foot and the Journey without a Guide," *Harvard Theological Review*, 52 (1959), 246, n. 3; by Pézard, *La vision finale du « Paradis »*, Extrait des *Mélanges* . . . offerts à Mieczyslaw Brahmer (Warsar, 1967), p. 396, n. 3; and by Singleton, *Inferno* 2. *Commentary*, p. 7. On the sun used for Virgil and Beatrice, see Singleton, *Dante Studies* II, p. 16. On the ecclesiastical application of the imagery, see Erich von Richthofen, "The Twins of Latona," in *The World of Dante*, ed. S.B. Chandler and J.A. Molinaro (Toronto, 1966), pp. 117-18; and Mazzotta, *Dante, Poet of the Desert* (Princeton, New Jersey, 1979), p. 9.
- 29 See *La sainte Bible* . . . de Jerusalem, p. 669. Singleton gives no reference in *Dante Studies* II, p. 62, or in "In exitu Israel," p. 1 (ed. Freccero, p. 102); his commentary on the *Inferno* *ibid.* cites only Mal. 4:2.
- 30 I have quoted *The Old Testament*, trans. Ronald Knox (New York, 1950), vol. II, p. 919, although "this world of dust" is not the sense of the Vulgate. For the application to the Son, see St. Thomas, S.C.G. IV.12; several meanings of "created wisdom" are given with a list of other senses in IV.8, ad 9m. For the Virgin Mary, see the Epistle of the Mass for the Common of her feasts, *The Liber Usualis*, p. 1264. St. Augustine applied Ecclus. 1:4 to the angels in *Conf.* XII.15.20. Marie-Thérèse d'Alverny starts with Christ and ends with theology in "Notes sur Dante et la Sagesse," *Revue des études italiennes*, 11 (1965), 5-24. Singleton stressed the application to Christ by Sts. Bernard and Thomas in *Dante Studies* II, pp. 78-79. He discussed created and uncreated wisdom on pp. 130-33 *ibid.*, describing the former as a "gift of God," from two texts of Aquinas on "sapientia" as the "donum Spiritus Sancti:" n. 9, p. 136. The very premise of Augustine's allegory in *Conf.* XIII is that the sun and the moon are created.
- 31 See the translations of the *Inferno* by Sinclair and Sayers ad loc., and Sally Mussetter, "Dante's Three Beasts and the *Imago Trinitatis*," *Dante Studies*, 95

- (1977), 47. On Gal. 5:22, see Hugh of St. Victor, *De fructibus spiritus et carnis*, c. 18, PL 176, 1004; and St. Thomas, *S.T. II-II*, qq. 28-30. In "Dante's Prologue Scene," *Dante Studies*, 84 (1966), 7, Freccero compared this silent sun with the Light that speaks to Augustine in *Conf.* VII; but that Light is the Word (VII.9.13) or Wisdom (XII.15.20); the sun is not mentioned until XIII.18.23.
- 32 *S.T. II-II*, q. 36, a.4, ad 3m ad fin. The other points are made in q. 45, aa. 2 and 6.
- 33 *S.T. II-II*, q. 30, a.3 c., ad 3m: "... quadium et pax nihil adiiciunt super rationem boni quod est obiectum caritatis: et ideo non requirunt alias virtutes quam caritatem. Sed misericordia respicit quandam specialem rationem. . . ."
- 34 Hollander notes the light-heartedness of Virgil's lines on pp. 213-14 of a learned reading of this canto, "The Tragedy of Divination," ch. 7 of his *Studies in Dante*, pp. 131-218. Freccero cited Ps. 120:1 'for the opening scene in "Dante's Firm Foot," p. 246, n. 3; Singleton cites Ps. 120:6 for *Purg.* XXVIII. 33, in his commentary, p. 669. In his commentary on the *Inferno*, pp. 362-63, he maintains that the moon Virgil mentions cannot be taken allegorically, but he argues as though Virgil claimed that it gave the pilgrim some help.
- 35 *S.T. II-II*, q. 9, a.1 c.; a.2, ad 1m.
- 36 *S.T. II-II*, q. 9, a.4 c. Siegfried Wenzel in *The Sin of Sloth: Acedia in Medieval Literature* (Chapel Hill, North Carolina, 1960), pp. 132-34, notes also that Dante has departed from a traditional reference to "Beati qui esuriunt et sitiunt etc." for *acedia*. Aquinas followed Augustine in attributing that beatitude to the gift of fortitude, which in his system perfects the virtue of fortitude: *ibid.*, q. 139, a.2 c.; but he opposed *acedia* not to fortitude but to charity: q. 35, a.2 c. Wenzel's biographical solution on pp. 133-34 does not mention philosophy, but rather "external goods." In "Casella's Song," p. 76, Freccero pointed out a request for "consolation" where the musician sings the very *canzone* that Dante had presented as a lovesong for philosophy. Two similar puns are: "donna di questi autori, di queste scienze e di questi libri" and "donna de lo 'ntelletto," *Conv.* II.xii.5 and III.xi.1, pp. 185 and 217.
- 37 St. Thomas, *S.T. I-II*, qq. 99-103.

Futurism: A Postmodern View*

The importance of Modernism and of the artistic movements of the first twenty or so years of this century need not be stressed. It is now widely acknowledged that the "historical avant-garde" was the crucible for most of the art forms and theories of art that made up the contemporary esthetic climate. This is evidenced, more than by the recently coined academic terms "*neoavanguardia*" and "postmodernism,"¹ by objective trends in the culture of the last two decades: the demand for closer ties between artistic performance and real-life interaction, which presupposes a view of art as social communicative behavior; the antitraditionalist thrust toward interdisciplinary or even non-disciplinary academic curricula; the experimental character of all artistic production; the increased awareness of the material qualities of art and its dependence on physical and technological possibilities, on the one hand; on the other, its dependence on social conventions or semiotic codes that can be exposed, broken, rearranged, transformed. I think we can agree that the multi-directional thrust of the arts and their expansion to the social and the pragmatic domain, the attempts to break down distinctions between highbrow and popular art, the widening of the esthetic sphere to encompass an unprecedented range of phenomena, the sense of fast, continual movement in the culture, of rapid obsolescence and a potential transformability of forms are issues characteristic of our time. Many were already implicit, often explicit, in the project of the historical avant-garde. But whereas this connection has been established and pursued for Surrealism and Dada, for example, Italian Futurism has remained rather peripheral in the current reassessment; indeed one could say that it has been marginalized and effectively ignored.

Yet in its clamorous if not glamorous way, and within the specific historical conditions of Italy, Futurism addressed those very issues. In fact, it posed them for the first time as esthetic problems, and tried to impose them on a culture which could not accept their relevance. In the intensity of their desire for change, for modernity, the Futurists sought to effect nothing less than a cultural revolution. The reasons of their failure, and the ways in which they tried,

are of interest to contemporary critical theory precisely because many of their concerns are still relevant today. I will mention only a few:

1. Art should not be a passive imitation of previous models, however great their value and the tradition they created. Art should demystify.
2. Traditional forms reflect a view of the world that belonged to a past society. New forms must be invented to go along with a new society. Art must innovate.
3. Art and society interact: the artist operates in the streets, and social events are of an artistic or esthetic nature. Hence art is public performance, not to be "contemplated in serenity" and privately, but to be experienced sensorily and publicly.
4. Art is not inspiration but device. It is technique, not moonlight that makes artistic expression possible.

When stated in such a way, these propositions may not be immediately recognizable as Futurist. The iconoclastic rhetoric and the purposely offensive jargon of Marinetti's group are perhaps one of the major obstacles to understanding. But, after all, they were themselves products of the literary tradition and their writings, including their manifestoes, were not meant to be "scientific" or expository or transparent. The Futurists knew that language is never innocent. So, they said:

Let's Murder the Moonlight! Down with the Tango and down with Parsifal! We abjure our symbolist masters. We bravely create the UGLY in literature, and everywhere we murder solemnity. We want to free this land from its smelly gangrene of professors, archaeologists, *ciceroni*, and antiquarians — For too long has Italy been a dealer in second-hand clothes. We must spit on the Altar of Art every day. . . . A racing car, its hood adorned with great pipes, like serpents of explosive breath, is more beautiful than the *Victory of Samothrace*.

And they said:

We will sing of great crowds excited by work, by pleasure, and by riot; we will sing of the multicolored, polyphonic tides of revolution in the modern capitals; we will sing of the vibrant nightly fervor of arsenals and shipyards blazing with violent electric moons. . . . Art is revolution, improvisation, impetus, enthusiasm, recordsetting, elasticity, elegance, generosity, struggle against every hindrance, destruction of ruins in the face of holy speed, enclosures to open. . . . Thanks to us, the time will come when life will no longer be a simple matter of bread and labor, nor a life of idleness either, but a *work of art*.²

In art, as in their desire for cultural revolution, the Futurists were in a hurry: they had to achieve it immediately, on the strength of

their will, activism, and brainstorm. Manifestoes (the idea of which Marinetti had brought back from his early years in France) were written in collaboration during noisy sessions at a neighborhood bar-café and often signed with names of individuals who had not been involved in writing that particular manifesto.³ Performances and exhibitions were put together on impulse, on the occasion of some public event held in any one of the larger cities in Italy, to which they would travel by train, at times all night long. Disruption and provocation, the impact of unexpectedness and extemporaneous acts were considered excellent tactics which didn't give them much time to elaborate or research their arguments. Nonetheless, the amount and variety of their works, both theoretical and creative, was extraordinary.

There are a few facts about Futurism that should be stated at the outset and examined. First, Futurism is very little known, except for its name and the name of its founder and central figure, Filippo Tommaso Marinetti. Outside of Italy, it is known chiefly as an avant-garde movement in the arts, primarily painting and sculpture — and here the names of Umberto Boccioni, Giacomo Balla and Carlo Carrà are certainly familiar.⁴ In the introduction to his important book on *Futurist Performance*, Michael Kirby states that one of the reasons for the neglect of Futurism (and he is referring to its contributions in experimental theatrical performance) is what he calls "national bias."

This means [Kirby writes] that we have tended to take our view of the history of the arts from the French and that they, in turn, have tended to stress the importance of French developments at the expense of those in other countries. . . . It could be pointed out that books dealing with avant-garde drama and the Theatre of the Absurd, for example, stress the importance of Dada without devoting space to Futurism. . . . Dada, it might be argued, is accepted by the "French school" of avant-garde chronology even though it originated in Switzerland. But Dada migrated, in part, to Paris — its history in Germany is still not well documented in English — and was crucial in the development of a truly French movement, Surrealism. Although Futurism should not be elevated at the expense of Dada, the earlier movement (Futurism) achieved many of the things for which Dada is given credit, and its work in, and contributions to, performance are much more extensive.⁵

In Italy also, contrary to what might be expected, the first serious efforts to study Futurism were made only in the late 50's, and even then they were merely monographs on individual artists (especially Boccioni), almost exclusively limited to the visual and plastic arts. Futurist music, theatre, cinema, architecture, literature, and their cultural impact were ignored until very recently: for example, as

late as 1962, Renato Poggioli's well-known *Theory of the Avant-Garde* contains virtually no analysis of Italian Futurism and merely restates the usual generalizations.⁶ Another indication is given by the fact that the Mondadori collection of Marinetti's major works, edited by Luciano De Maria, appeared only in 1968.⁷

Currently, there is a resurgence of interest in Futurism throughout the Western world, particularly in Italy and in the US. In order to discuss the possible causes and the modalities of this renaissance, one must at the same time account for the long period of oblivion. Actually, oblivion is not the right word. There is evidence that Italian artists after 1920 have *not at all disregarded* the formal proposals of Futurism, and in more or less direct ways this is as true of poetry as it is of painting.⁸ As for literary criticism and artistic theory, the Futurists were not so much forgotten as they were repressed, condemned, ostracized — which goes to show how closely esthetic values are related to sociopolitical values. To put it simply, many of the Futurists, particularly Marinetti, were seen only as apologists for the Fascist regime; and Futurism itself was thought of as the demagogic torch bearer of Fascist culture, the subverter of traditional standards of value in the arts, the loud, undisciplined, irresponsible, bohemian counterpart of that motley group of unemployed, veterans, and street hoods who had been hired by Mussolini's boys to march on Rome in 1922. However, it is not that simple a matter, for artistic movements, like historical periods, are not homogeneous or monolithic but rather wrought with internal contradictions which often can be assessed only in a larger historical perspective.

Looking at Futurism today, in both its historical dimension and its unquestionable contribution to artistic experimentation, one finds keen historical ironies, which are precisely the phenomenal form of the internal contradictions I mentioned a while ago. For instance, much like Decadentism or its typically Italian sub-division called *Crepuscolarismo*, Futurism has been seen as the reflection in art of a decayed bourgeois society in the last stages of its cultural evolution. This assessment is obviously insufficient, for several reasons: first, Futurism *did* usher into Italy a radically new and modern consciousness of artistic processes and forms whose strength is evident in the major artists and writers of this century, from Pirandello to Ungaretti to Antonioni. Second, Futurism, as the forerunner of the whole European avant-garde, *did* extend the boundaries of artistic expression and possibilities beyond the schemata of 19th century bourgeois esthetics. Third, if the orthodox Marxist or Lukácsian reflection theory were correct, how could one account for the fact that the strongest and most success-

ful adversary of Futurist art theory and practice was the liberal bourgeoisie itself, whose cultural hegemony (to use Gramsci's powerful term) was represented, throughout the first half of the century, by the work and personality of Benedetto Croce? If, during the entire period of my schooling in Italy, from the early 50's to the mid-60's, I seldom even *heard* the word "Futurism," this is due to the specific cultural politics of post-war Italy. And the fact that the renewal of interest in Futurism appears at a time in which the whole of Italy, as well as literary studies, are concretely affected by historical materialist theories and politics, would only be a further and keener irony.

The sense of how the Italian *neoavanguardia* responds to the issues raised (but not solved) by Futurism is conveyed by the words of one of its foremost figures, Edoardo Sanguineti, writer, critic, editor and militant. Like Marinetti some 60 years before, Sanguineti speaks against museums, but he does so with an awareness of the real relations between artistic production and socio-economic factors in the modern culture-industry that Marinetti did not have:

The museum and the market are contingent and intercommunicating; or rather, they are two façades of the same social edifice. . . . If the museum is a true image of the autonomy of art, it also represents compensation for art's subjection to commerce. Art descends to the level of the market, but, once plunged into it, finds itself straightway thrown back towards the inaccessible Olympian heights of the classics. The process seems mysterious, until one grasps how the mechanism works as a whole; one then understands that the museum's specific *raison d'être* rests on the fact that, in it, all the commercial reality that surrounds art is sublimated. It represents the highest level and furthest limit of art's career as commodity; here in the museum the clinking of moneybags is finally stilled; reality hides its head in the clouds and the artistic product is offered as the sole object which no money can buy. . . . Thus the economic élite, while destroying the meaning of art, assumes the noble role of saving it. It is by definition, the prerogative of the *petit bourgeois* to conserve traditional common sense, and, by some illusion, all the eternal human values, as they have been instilled in him by school, family and church. Thus he continues, poor man, to be astonished and appalled by the dehumanization of art. But nothing can frighten the *grand bourgeois* who controls prices, directs consumption, and knows perfectly well what he is buying. Just as he knows that each thing has its price, and that it is simply a matter of paying the right price, he also knows equally well that every product of art will, sooner or later, find its place in an appropriate museum.⁹

The Futurists also, like the *neoavanguardia*, were active politically. They formed their own party, participated in street rallies as well as staged their own, and published political manifestoes in addition

to esthetic ones. They, too, were going against the grain of prevailing academism and bourgeois conceptions of the social function of art. But their politics was different. Robert Dombroski and Stephen Sharkey have argued that the Futurist program and ideological system were based on two theoretical and technical precepts:

first, the rejection of delimiters, i.e., of the existing categories by which human physical, social, and psychological realities are organized; secondly, the representation of the dynamics of movement. Such a programme presented itself as the diametrical opposite to what is generally described as the bourgeois artistic paradigm wherein a high premium is placed on linear causality and the historical determining of experience. By contrast, Futurism stressed the coherent simultaneity of experience and the interpenetration of objects, thus superseding, in its view, static representation of reality and the social-psychological quiescence such a representation implied.¹⁰

The configuration of the sign-vehicle in Futurist poetry, that is to say, its formal devices — verbal and graphic, — were meant to effect a drastic semantic rupture in poetic discourse through the breakdown of all metric, phonic, and thematic constraints (we may recall that the battle for free verse was fought in Marinetti's own poetry review, *Poesia*, around 1907). Agrammatical writing, *parole in libertà*, the extreme use of ellipsis, analogy and onomatopoea, and the emphasis placed on non-representation and abstract graphic values were the verbal/visual/phonic vehicles of what Marinetti defined as "wire-less imagination." By its multi-media, cacophonous messages, Futurist art wanted to communicate a sense of dynamism as perpetual tension or strife, as orgasmic psycho-physical energy; with these it sought to replace both the classical principle of decorum and balance, and the romantic bourgeois ideal of the psychic and moral integrity of the Subject. Due to the impossibility of linear and unequivocal communication, art — and consequently, life — would be perceived as process itself. In this scheme, process as unbridled movement or active creativity was opposed to structure as rational organization in social and artistic forms that were static, reactionary, "passéist." And so the Futurists came to equate process with progress, dynamism with speed, modernity with machine. Machine-like men and humanoid mechanisms, Dombroski and Starkey suggest, were the dual aspects of the anti-humanist hybrid force which constituted the Futurist "mythology" and by which the Futurists hoped to revolutionize society at large and the artistic intellectual academy in particular, since the latter is the repository, the conscious bearer of cultural tradition.

Their violent, ritualized destruction of everything "passéist," from the moonlight to the museum, from sedentary life to Ibsenian theatre, from harmony to syntax, was meant to clear the way for the libidinal creative energies that had been repressed within bourgeois culture. But, ironically, those energies had to be embodied in and released by, not humans but machines. "Motors, they say, are truly mysterious. . . . They seem to have personalities, souls, or wills. They have whims, freakish impulses. You must caress them, treat them respectfully, never mishandle or overtire them."¹¹ This two-fold attraction toward irrational and technological forces found its mythical expression in war as the supreme form of man-machine intercourse. War was at once the verification of technological power (World War I was indeed called the first technological war), and the achievement of chaos in which the orgiastic self ultimately transcends nature and society through self-negation.

It would be incorrect, however, or at best simplistic, merely to label as Fascist either one or the other component of the Futurist mythology, even though it did eventually become instrumental to, or rather instrumentalized by, the Fascist State. Technology was an exciting new reality in 1909. Its potential for social development and for new forms of communication (including art or esthetic communication) were perceived not only by Futurism. There was, for example, Russian constructivism around 1920, after the October revolution.¹² Or, to choose an international phenomenon, the development of cinema is a good case in point: the excitement of early film viewers who were thrilled by Lumière's train engine coming at them from the wide screen was elicited by mechanical and chemical means (I chose film as an example because film technology has lent itself to art, to politics, to criticism and to social science research, to mass communication, to commercial advertising, even to the domestic purposes of home movies). Merely to equate Futurism with Fascism because of the former's attraction to technology and to the irrational does not provide us with any useful means to deal with the continued lure of technology in contemporary society, or with the strong irrationalistic currents that survive in Western cultures and countercultures, evidenced by the increasing concern with religion, ritual, mysticism, and the occult.

The problem with Futurism was that it finally substituted its own mythology for the traditional one, remaining caught in its rhetoric. It fetishized both the products and the process of industrialization, making them abstractions, tropes, purely discursive events; and it hypostatized certain values into dogmas, slogans,

judgments out of context. In other words, Futurism "irrationalized" technology, losing track of its being a social production and endowing it with inherent, mystical, a-historical powers. By ignoring the real social relations on which technological "progress" was being achieved, they did not see that the potential of technology, which could have greatly improved and renewed Italian society as a whole, was in fact being channeled into wealth and power for a single class, the capital-owning or grande bourgeoisie, who needed war in order to increase that power. In their disregard for socio-economic factors, the Futurists failed to see how their art and ideology were related to the system of capitalist production; and they found themselves in the totally contradictory position of reaffirming as absolute and necessary that very social organization against which they were fighting; namely, the forces of industrialization in a commodity-producing society. Having no understanding of the relation between socio-economic base and ideological superstructure (in Marxian terms), the Futurists assumed, like their opponent Croce, that art was unmotivated by, and autonomous from, socio-economic forces; and they expected to change society by revolutionizing certain institutions or superstructural aspects of the social fabric: art forms, museums, universities, religious conventions, marriage. Thus, while they correctly assessed the importance of technology to social transformation — especially in a country like Italy, just beginning to raise its standards of living and still ridden with enormous socio-economic problems — the Futurists mythologized technology, placed it on the altar, and bowed to it.¹³ In this way, by abstracting from the historical process, they *universalized* the particular class reality of that very bourgeoisie they intended to do away with.

Since Futurism was inextricably compromised by Fascism, a fact that has weighed heavily on its esthetic assessment, I wish to clarify the situation a little more. In the first place, we must distinguish between the first period of Futurism up to the Great War, in which some of its most representative artists died (Boccioni, and the architect Sant'Elia — Carrà seceded to *Pittura Metafisica*), and the post-war period. Almost everyone agrees in determining the life span of the movement from 1909 (the year of the first Manifesto published in *Le Figaro* by Marinetti) to 1920. Fascism came into power two years later, in 1922, with the appointment of Mussolini as Prime Minister. So the actual relation of Futurism to Fascism after World War I consisted in large measure in the position assumed by Marinetti himself vis-à-vis the Fascist regime.

Marinetti was born on December 22, 1876 in Alexandria. The bare facts of a childhood spent in Egypt, far from his parents' country, and a youth and formative years in Paris, hold a clue to the man who not only founded the Italian avant-garde movement, but also invented the model for the rest of Europe. In one highly cultured and who, unlike most Italian intellectuals of the time, was steeped in 19th century French literature and in the then declining season of symbolism, the visceral, obsessive love for the mother country was to produce the grand scheme of Marinetti's life: to raise his abused country to the cultural and political level of France and of the other major European nations. For this purpose, an art "absolument moderne" (in Rimbaud's words) had to be created, free of purist and pedantic constraints, an action-art (*arte-azione*) capable of leaving behind the academy and encompassing the totality of life. The cultural model he set up, namely *the movement*, was open to and composed of anyone, without restrictions of school, age or class, who tendentially had "elective affinity" with the artistic and extra-artistic ideology of Futurism. The movement did not focus on a single sphere of artistic activity, but, on the contrary, was open to all innovative action aimed at renewing the culture and social behavior. It posited art and life as continuous, although such continuity had to be demonstrated by their clash and the merciless confrontation of all their aspects. This same model was followed by Dada and Surrealism, and later revived in the 60's. If Marinetti did not invent but merely perfected the art of manifesto-making (*l'arte di far manifesti*), he did originate the concept and the practice of staging rallies and performances known as "Futurist evenings" (*serate futuriste*); these began approximately in 1910, and were later followed by the Dada evenings at the Cabaret Voltaire in Zurich, which opened in 1916.

It has been said, outside of hyperbole, that although Marinetti was not a painter, Futurist painting would not have existed without Marinetti.¹⁴ His seemingly endless vitality, personal enthusiasm, brilliancy, resourcefulness, and the variety of his interests and initiatives made him the central figure of Futurist cultural politics, obscuring his contribution as a prolific and diversified producer of art. Unlike Apollinaire's, Marinetti's non-theoretical works, from poems to novels to radio plays to theatrical *sintesi*, have not yet been properly studied.

(Let me open, here, a brief parenthesis. There are many obvious parallels between Marinetti and Apollinaire: they were born four years apart; they were both Italians transplanted in France, both early exiles in a way — one from the mother country, the other from society; — both widely-travelled and cosmopolitan, both

volcanic personalities with a private and public myth: the love of poetry and of country, the belief in art as a force of life, the "esthetization of war" (Walter Benjamin) for which the explosion of a grenade was like the blossoming of a flower. Both enlisted as soon as the Great War was declared. The son of Madame de Kostrowitski was a gourmet who ate enormous quantities of food; the Futurist chainsmoked. They were both jailed, Guillaume for an alleged theft at the Louvre, Filippo Tommaso for an anti-Austrian demonstration — rather romantic episodes which, if anything, added glamor to their legends. Apollinaire was not the first Italian to have become a famous Frenchman: there were, of course, Caterina de Medici and Napoleon Bonaparte, and there would be Yves Montand and certainly others. Nor was Marinetti the first Italian to entertain what the MLA calls "literary relations" with France: for example, Brunetto Latini, Petrarch, Leonardo, Goldoni, D'Annunzio, Ungaretti, up to Italo Svevo whose fortune was made in France by Valéry Larbaud, and Italo Calvino who lives in Paris. But the Marinetti-Apollinaire connection is a peculiar case of parallel lives.)¹⁵

Going back to Marinetti's position vis-à-vis Fascism, it is true that he considered Fascism as the social movement potentially capable of fulfilling the mission of Futurism as an artistic and cultural revolution. Even his acceptance of the membership in the Accademia d'Italia in 1929, when Fascism was in full swing, was motivated by the desire to secure official status for Futurism, which at the time was more tolerated than encouraged. However, his adherence was not always uncritical: he did oppose Mussolini's self-serving acquiescence to the demands of the monarchists and of the Vatican; and, as the Fascist ideology became more and more reactionary with the establishment of the dictatorship, Marinetti vehemently, if vainly, protested the racial laws against the Jews in 1938, and the late-fascist condemnation of modernism as "degenerate art."¹⁶ Undoubtedly, Marinetti's political adherence to Fascism was not unrelated to what I have described as the mythology of Futurism as a whole, whose contradictions rested on its eventual support of the very social class against which their war at home had been waged. The progress made by contemporary Italian historiography in the study of Fascism has contributed new perspectives on the entire period.

In a recent book entitled *Proletari senza rivoluzione* (*Proletarians Without Revolution*), Raffaele Del Carria proposes that the widely accepted distinction, à propos of the Futurists or those he calls "the angry young men" of the first 2 decades of the century, between nationalist-reactionary on one hand, and extreme-left socialists

on the other, is correct only to some extent: it is true that the nationalists (Papini, Prezzolini, D'Annunzio, Marinetti) were as openly in favor of militarism as they were strongly anti-working class; while the left-wing extremists (among whom was Mussolini), fought against the established Socialist Party in the name of the subordinate classes. However, the historian argues convincingly, there were substantial affinities in the two groups: both came from the petty and intellectual bourgeoisie and expressed its claims and its frustrated aspirations — hence the co-existence of libertarian, anarchical gestures and the will “to sing the masses” with the glorification of war and patriotism in the Futurist manifestoes.¹⁷ The contradictions of Futurism, then, were those of a large sector of the Italian bourgeoisie which, being composed of diversified social elements, trades or professions, was neither on the side of labor nor on the side of capital. What this numerous, dissatisfied segment of the Italian population did not have, in the Giolitti era (1903-13), was a piece of the political pie, a real voice in the new parliament, a comparable amount of political power and influence. Unlike in France or England, capitalism in Italy had developed with gaps and loopholes, and because of its weakness could not accomodate the new groups that had emerged out of the underprivileged classes (for example, the bureaucracy, the newest class of unified Italy). At the same time, these groups did not find entrance into the workers’ organizations affiliated with the then very strong Socialist Party, whose politics of reformism and class collaboration earned them the label of “labor aristocracy.” The result, for the petty bourgeoisie, was a feeling of dispossessedness, of being shortchanged or alienated from its rightful class affiliation. Thus, they were united to the socialists in the fierce critique of liberal parliamentarism, while, on the other hand, they shared the conservatives’ hatred of labor unions. These twin antithetical impulses constituted the core of the petty bourgeois ambivalence between revolution and reaction. It is not therefore surprising, in Del Carria’s view, that when the battle between the main antagonists (namely, the capital-owning industrial bourgeoisie, and the working class organizations) was resolved with the defeat of the latter in 1919-20 (the “red biennium”), Mussolini and Marinetti were together on the side of the victorious hegemonic class.¹⁸ The historiographical novelty of Del Carria’s thesis is apparent in his conclusion: whereas the Fascist as well as the anti-Fascist historiographies maintained that all artistic avant-garde and political vanguard movements in Italy at the beginning of the century were destined to flow into Fascism, as if by historical necessity, Del Carria proposes that such outcome was not at all determined, and

indeed Marinetti might have found himself on the side of the proletariat had the working class succeeded in becoming the dominant class through revolution. In other words, at that historical moment, in the goals and self-definition of the class represented in art by Futurism (the petty and intellectual bourgeoisie), there was sufficient ambiguity to go both ways — as it were. Which is not only a new historical judgment on the cultural and artistic phenomenon of Futurism, but a useful approach to understanding its contradictions.

If I have insisted on the social and ideological aspects of Futurism, it is because there are almost no works in English that confront this fundamental issue. There are, on the contrary, several excellent books that document its formal and theoretical innovations in all the arts. So I will only outline some of the more striking futurist hypotheses of the Futurists, and refer the reader to books like Kirby's, Martin's, and Taylor's.

Looking at Futurism from the contemporary, postmodern, debate in the arts, particularly in the United States, I would select three main areas of concerns:

1. The notion of performance as expressive activity between performer and other people or objects in a contextualized situation, theatrical or not; performance as a modality of human interaction basic to both art and life.

2. The extension of artistic categories and means; the extension in space of the artistic object into the environment; and the expansion of the traditional notion of linear time.

3. The perception of art as material of physical production; and conversely, of the artistic object as process or processual event.

As Kirby's book amply documents, the notion of performance was central to Futurist art and life: the "futurist evenings" invented certain techniques of performance very much used in contemporary experimental theatre, such as violent surprise and the disorientation or psychological brutalization of spectators, intended to force their participation. More consciously than today's "skywriting," Fedele Azari's *aerial theatre* (1918-1919) used the sky for a stage and airplanes as performers — their "gestures" and movements being derived from the acrobatics of the flyers during the war. The Futurists *synthetic theatre*, in which the specially designed props, sets and costumes played an essential role, extended the notion of performance to objects, undermining the social and psychological integrity of the spectator as Subject. This was to be pursued, in different ways, by Pirandello and by the Theatre of the Absurd. The similarity, pointed out by many,

between Ionesco's *Les chaises* and Marinetti's *Vengono (They Are Coming: Drama of Objects)* is indeed striking. Another clearly absurd piece of the same year 1915, *Le basi (Feet)*, consists of 7 short vignettes in which the audience sees only the performers' legs. Futurist *sintesi* were predicated on constructed scenic space, that is to say, the compenetration of performers and sets, including the audience, in a designed — horizontal and vertical — environment.¹⁹ The *sintesi* also employed simultaneity techniques on stage similar to what the Futurists were trying out in film, especially montage and the split-screen.²⁰ The spectacular and the popular side of performance in live interaction were stressed in the *Variety Theatre Manifesto* (1913), "*varietà*" in Italian meaning something between cabaret and vaudeville. The concern has re-emerged in the current studies on circus performance (by the semiotician Paul Bouissac in particular) and in theatrical pageants like Luca Ronconi's *Orlando Furioso*, staged in stadiums, lakefronts or city squares.²¹

Another interesting experiment was outlined by Marinetti in the *Tactilism Manifesto* (1921). His "tactile theatre" was to appeal primarily to the spectators' sense of touch, and Marinetti envisioned moving bands or turning wheels that were to be touched by the spectators and provide different surfaces and textural rhythms, accompanied by music and lights. This latter example is perhaps the most obvious link between the visual-plastic art object and the theatre: in fact, it seems to be a direct precursor of Kaprow's assemblages. In Kaprow's development from painting to assemblages (objects that can be handled or walked around) to environments (objects that must be walked into or through), the basic principle is the extension in space of the expressive function of the object.²² Happenings, and later events and activities (as Kaprow now calls his works) extend that function in time, as performance, becoming more theatrical. In a less orderly fashion, the Futurists experimented with both types of extensions, and with different sensory stimuli (e.g. some playscripts, or more exactly playscores contain directions for altering the temperature in the auditorium as well as lighting, and Marinetti even thought of a "perfumer" that would spread scents in the theatre).

The Italian art historian Maurizio Calvesi, one of the first to re-discover Futurist art, suggests a direct line of ascendance from Boccioni to Pollock and action painting, and argues that Futurist dynamism in painting is not, as was believed, a simple photographic or mechanistic reproduction of movement, but an internal charge, energy deployed from within, an expansion of the painted object from the inside out through luminous and color vibrations. Calvesi

also traces to Marinetti (1913) the origin of commercial advertising fetishism, the billboards with moving luminous figures, eyes or mouths opening and closing, that were to be picked up by the American Neo Dada and Pop artists.²³ The Futurist so-called "art of noise," music conceived as collage of disparate sounds, extended the concept and range of musical possibilities, instruments and notation in the direction later taken by *musique concrète*, electronic music, etcetera. Luigi Russolo's *intonarumori* (noise-intoners, or noise organs) and his other personally constructed instruments, *psosfarmoni* (imitating sounds of nature), foreshadow Cage's "prepared piano" and the Moog Synthesizer.²⁴ Semantically coded noises were "actors" in Marinetti's radio *sintesi*, or radio pieces made up entirely of sound effects, prototypes of the famous Orson Welles' *War of the Worlds* at the Mercury Theatre. Likewise, one could see Marinetti's poem, *The Battle of Adrianople*, or other free-word compositions (*parole in libertà*) as a musical score; which furthermore stressed, in its typographical format, the plastic-figurative value of writing that is so new today in the postmodern novel, in visual or concrete poetry, or in the "simultaneous" filosofictional writing of, say, Derrida's *Glas*.²⁵

I will conclude by restating some of the questions that interested me in regard to Futurism and to the avant-garde past and present.

Why did the "Futurist revolution" fail? Why were their energy, enthusiasm and imagination so easily co-opted by Fascism? Were the Futurists' artistic inventions finally resolved, like the subsequent movements, in sterile formalism? Or, is formalism the eternal childhood disease of all avant-garde? Is there more than a simple parallel between the disillusionment suffered by the Futurists after 1918, in the social despair that rose in Italy as the aftermath of the Great War, and the sense of apathy felt by many, in this country and in Europe, after 1968, with the setting in of reaction in the present restoration climate? (Which, by the way, may explain the current fascination with Dada, whose aloof, nihilistic irony was a result of the disbelief in the power of art to lead or even affect society.) And more: considering the European avant-garde at the turn of the century, and the new avant-garde that began in the United States in the Kennedy years, is the role of innovation different in 1970 from what it was in 1910? Or is Postmodernism a naive re-play of modernist events, and therefore simply a case of "artistic amnesia" (Jacobi)?

The vicissitude of Futurism and of the historical avant-garde showed clearly that art is cooptable because, in and by itself, art is not revolutionary. It does, however, and perhaps better than any other cultural form, deal with and expose the contradictions of

its historical moment. In this sense, all art is Futurist: it not only reflects social reality but also invents, or proposes alternative models, new possibilities, a new "language" — a new perceptual organization of personal and social reality. I would hope that the current resurgence of interest in modernism and the historical study of the avant-garde will bring home to us the awareness that history, like space and time, is not simple linear progression from old to new, with or without solution of continuity; but a very complex dialectic process in which artistic forms *do* have a role, however indirect. This awareness itself, I think, if nothing else, should be one of the main differences between the first and the second avant-garde.

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NOTES

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- 1 The first to use the term "postmodernism" was, I believe, Ihab Hassan in "Frontiers of Criticism," *Virginia Quarterly*, 46 (Winter 1970), reprinted in *Paracriticisms: Seven Speculations of the Times* (Urbana, 1975). The concept was elaborated in *The Dismemberment of Orpheus: Toward a Postmodern Literature* (New York, 1971). Since then it has been acquiring international currency.
- 2 These quotations are taken, as mere samples of the Futurist writing, and therefore out of sequence and of context, from F.T. Marinetti, *Selected Writings*, ed. by R.W. Flint (New York, 1971). Writings by the major Futurists are available in English in Umbro Apollonio, ed., *Futurist Manifestos* (New York, 1975).
- 3 Remo Chiti, *La vita si fa da sé. Fantasia, teatro sintetico, scritti futuristi*, a cura di M. Verdone (Bologna, 1974).
- 4 I am thinking, for example, of Joshua Taylor, *Futurism* (New York, 1961); Werner Haftmann, *Painting in the 20th Century* (New York, 1960); Christa Baumgarth, *Geschichte des Futurismus* (Reibek bei Hamburg, 1966); and Marianne W. Martin, *Futurist Art and Theory: 1909-1915* (Oxford, 1968). As the dates show, Western interest in Futurism did not start until the 60's.
- 5 Michael Kirby, *Futurist Performance* (New York, 1971), pp. 5-6.
- 6 Poggioli's *Theory of the Avant-Garde* (Cambridge, Mass., 1968) was originally published in Italian as *Teoria dell'arte d'avanguardia* (Bologna, 1962).
- 7 F.T. Marinetti, *Teoria e invenzione futurista*, a cura di Luciano De Maria (Milano, 1968) and *La grande Milano tradizionale e futurista*, a cura di Luciano De Maria (Milano, 1969). A very useful paperback guide and anthology, also edited by De Maria, is *Per conoscere Marinetti e il Futurismo* (Milano, 1975). In addition, two major Italian journals devoted an entire issue to Futurism: *Sipario* (December 1967), which published several theatre manifestoes, texts of plays and scenographies, and *Il Verri*, 33/34 (1970).

- 8 Maurizio Calvesi, *Le due avanguardie*. Vol. 1: *Studi sul Futurismo* (Bari, 1971), p. 17 et passim; and Gianfranco Contini, "Innovazioni metriche italiane tra Otto e Novecento" in his *Varianti e altra linguistica* (Torino, 1970), pp. 590-91.
- 9 "The Sociology of the Avant-Garde" in Elisabeth & Tom Burns, eds., *Sociology of Literature and Drama* (London, 1973), pp. 396-97. See also Sanguineti's "La guerra futurista" in *Ideologia e linguaggio* (Milano, 1970, 2nd edition), pp. 38-43. Still within the Italian *neoavanguardia* Sanguineti's negative assessment of Futurism is balanced by Renato Barilli, "Marinetti e il nuovo sperimentalismo," *Il Verri*, 33/34 (1970), 89-102. According to Barilli, what appeals to the *neo-sperimentalismo* is Marinetti's originality as a theoretician who argued for the convergence of all the arts — especially the "lesser" ones, — and insisted on art's incidence upon the chaotic mobility of life by its modification and expansion of the sensory sphere; thus Marinetti ultimately proposed a very contemporary view of art and culture (or culture and politics) as inter-communicating zones without solution of continuity. On the *neoavanguardia*, and its relation to the historical avant-garde, see Umberto Eco, "The Death of the Gruppo 63," *20th Century Studies*, 5 (September 1971), 60-71.
- 10 Stephen R. Sharkey and Robert S. Dombroski, "Revolution, Myth and Mythical Politics: The Futurist Solution," *Journal of European Studies*, vi (December 1976), 233.
- 10 Marinetti, "Multiplied Man and the Reign of the Machine" in *Selected Writings*, op. cit., p. 91.
- 12 See Stephen Bann, ed., *The Tradition of Constructivism* (New York, 1974). Unlike the Italian Futurists, the Soviet Constructivists of 1920-23 (Gabo, Pevsner, Taitlin, El Lissitzky) saw the artist as a worker in another field of production, as a social being concerned with imposing on the world an order based on scientific laws and logical reasoning. However, their pronouncements, extolling technique against the tyranny of the individual and proclaiming the social function of art, were not dissimilar in tone from the Futurist slogans.
- 13 "The right to strike, equality before the law, the authority of numbers, the usurping power of mobs, the speed of international communications, the habits of hygiene and domestic comfort; these wholly new phenomena require large, popular, well-ventilated apartment blocks, absolutely comfortable trains, tunnels, iron bridges, immense meeting halls, and perfected *chambres de toilette* for the rapid daily care of the body. . . .
In Japan they carry on the strangest of trades: the sale of coal made from human bones: . . . skeletons of heroes who do not hesitate to be crushed in mortars by their own sons, their relatives, or their fellow citizens, to be brutally vomited out by Japanese artillery against hostile armies. Glory to the indomitable ashes of man, that come to life in cannons!" (Marinetti, "War, the World's Only Hygiene", in *Selected Writings*, pp. 80-82.
- 14 Calvesi, *Le due avanguardie*.
- 15 I owe the biographical information on Apollinaire to Roger Shattuck's edition of his *Selected Writings* (New York, 1971). For Marinetti, see Ines Scaramucci, *Le Avanguardie del primo Novecento. Il Futurismo* (Milano, 1972), and Gaetano Mariani, *Il primo Marinetti* (Firenze, 1970). On Marinetti's relationship to French culture, see Bruno Romani, *Dal Simbolismo al Futurismo* (Firenze, 1969).
- 16 Luciano De Maria, "Figlio dei classici," *Tuttolibri* (7 agosto, 1976), p. 2.
- 17 See in particular the first Manifesto of Futurism and Marinetti's "Beyond Communism" (1920): "'Soiled and moribund bourgeoisie' is an absurd description of that great mass of young, intelligent, and hard-working lower middle class; notaries, lawyers, etc., all sons of the people, all absorbed in working furiously to do better than their fathers" (*Selected Writings*, p. 151).

- 18 R. Del Carria, *Proletari senza rivoluzione. Storia delle classi subalterne italiane dal 1860 al 1950* (Milano, 1970), vol. I, pp. 349-53.
- 19 This notion has been recently re-proposed by Richard Schechner, *Environmental Theatre* (New York, 1973).
- 20 Unfortunately, the only two Futurist films of which there is record are lost: Arnaldo Ginna's *Vita futurista* and Anton Giulio Bragaglia's *Il perfido incanto*, both made in 1916. See Kirby, *Futurist Performance*, p. 120-42.
- 21 See Cesare Milanese, *Luca Ronconi e la realtà del teatro* (Milano, 1973), and John Lahr, *Astonish Me: Adventures in Contemporary Theatre* (New York, 1973).
- 22 Allan Kaprow, *Assemblages, Environments & Happenings* (New York, 1966).
- 23 Maurizio Calvesi, *Le due avanguardie*.
- 24 Kirby, *Futurist Performance*, pp. 39-40. An interesting example of how Russolo's musical experiments with noise were utilized in a non-artistic but purely social context is cited by R. Fulöp-Miller, *The Mind and Face of Bolshevism* (London, 1927), who describes the fifth anniversary celebration of the October revolution in the city of Baku, where a concert was performed by two batteries of artillery, several regiments of infantry, the foghorns of the Caspian fleet, six machine-gun units, 8 hydroplanes, and choruses in which all the spectators participated (quoted by Martin Damus, *Funktionen der Bildenden Kunst im Spatkapitalismus*, Frankfurt, 1973, p. 36).
- 25 On postmodern fiction, see Raymond Federman, ed., *Surfiction: Fiction Now and Tomorrow* (Chicago, 1975).

The Form of Dante's "Libello" and its Challenge to Petrarch

Germaine Warkentin

What questions arise when we compare the form of the *Vita Nuova* with that of Petrarch's *Canzoniere*? Perhaps the first should be "what form?" For though it is usual to acknowledge the likeness between the two works, to call the *Canzoniere* as Adolfo Jenni does, "una seconda *Vita Nuova* (ma per quasi tutta una vita) interamente in versi,"¹ this brief statement alone contains two qualifications, one about content and the other about form, which positively demand that we confront not the resemblances between the two works, but their obvious differences. Can the *Vita Nuova* and the *Canzoniere* be said in any real sense to belong to the same class of work? When the question of genre is raised, the links between Petrarch's lyric collection and the European sonnet sequence are apparent. But the *Vita Nuova* is not a sonnet sequence, and it is only by doing some violence that one can apply to it the generic term "canzoniere," which I have concluded, after long debate, is most appropriate for that type of work.

Yet as Jenni's observation makes clear, the two works are linked in such a way that the shape of the *Canzoniere* seems not merely a commentary on the shape of the *Vita Nuova*, but a critique of it as well. The problem this tension poses is of some importance to those of us outside Italian studies who need to deal with issues in our own literature raised by the influence of both collections, and those descended from them, as for example Ronsard, Sidney, and Shakespeare. To produce a historically developed description of the genre they represent has been a goal of mine for some years. But to do so we have to face one of the most fiery — and, I think, illuminating — of its cruces: the influence of the form of the *Vita Nuova* on the *Canzoniere*.

The originality of the *Vita Nuova* is profound.² It is usual to note the resemblance of its mixed verse and prose to two types of work well known to Dante, the *prosimetrum*, as exemplified for example in Boethius, and the Provençal manuscript *chansonnier*, with its lyrics surrounded by prose *vidas* and *razos*. In actuality, there is little in

earlier writing to which Dante could have gone for anything more than the lumber to construct his edifice. Boethius offered Dante an important philosophical dimension and the example of a reflective use of the first person, but his poems are not linked to his prose by the interpretative devices with which Dante weaves his together, and throughout they are subordinated to the much more important prose dialogue. The Provençal *chansonniers* offered of course the tradition of amorous vernacular lyric of which the *Vita Nuova* exemplifies a later phase, but with one possible exception there is no such *chansonnier* organized as a single work by the author of its poems. The basis for the unified lyric collection, *canzoniere*, or sonnet sequence was laid when Dante brought elements from all of these — prose and verse carefully integrated with each other, an ambitious philosophical perspective, intense subjectivity, and a coherent body of erotic metaphor — under the control of a single conception. I shall argue here, however, that the genre's eventual shape resulted from Petrarch's essentially antagonistic response to this synthesis.

The *Vita Nuova* is composed of a group of subjective amorous lyrics set in a prose matrix. The prose on one hand narrates the events of an amorous experience of which the poems record crucial moments, and on the other tells us something about how to read those poems. The lyrics are skillfully organized as well to display the generic resources of each type of poem within a larger aesthetic structure; unlike preceding manuscript collections of lyrics,³ the *Vita Nuova* disperses single *canzoni* among groups of sonnets, and devises out of this variation of genres a pyramidal structure which displays the forms in a hieratic scheme pivoting on the central canzone "Donna pietosa e di novella etate."⁴

The raising of such a structure is dependent from the beginning on Dante's awareness of the contrast between the potentialities of these component genres (and their related prose) and of the possibility of controlled variation in the interests of a larger effect. That larger effect is the construction of an *itinerarium*, a journey of the lover from the first moments of his love, through sorrow, to the "intelligenza nova" of VN XLI. It is this conscious awareness of the diversity of formal elements to be controlled that differentiates the *Vita Nuova* as a lyric collection from on one hand, the miscellaneous *chansonniers* with their rigid groupings of poems by author and genre, and on the other hand the sonnet narrative the *Fiore*, or the contemporary sequences of sonnets arranged according to external schemata or in mere epistolary clusters.⁵

It is possible that Dante's near contemporary the troubadour Guiraut Riquier (1230-1290?) made the same leap of the imagina-

tion. In MS. BN Fr. 856 (a fourteenth-century manuscript known to have been produced in Provence and to have remained there for many years) his lyrics are grouped purely by genre, but each is given its *cagione* in the form of the date on which it was written, and in several places comments have been included on the prosody of the poems. These words appear at the beginning:

Thus begin the songs of Guiraut Riquier of Narbonne in this manner: with *cansos* and *verses* and *pastourelles* and *retrouenches* and *descorts* and *albas* and other diverse works and thus arranged as it was ordered in his own book. Which book, written in his own hand, was all thus copied, and says what is listed above.⁶

"Lo sieu libre," says the scribe: the poet's own book. It would be interesting to know if Guiraut actually did arrange his own book, which has not only the generic order outlined above, but a moral one as well (like Petrarch's *Canzoniere*, it ends with a hymn to the Virgin). What is more important, however, is that some near-contemporary thought he had, and thus documented what is of central interest for Dante's imaginative leap: acceptance of the idea that such a book could be put in order by the author himself, and that this order might exemplify by its form his vision of his own creativity. The great unacknowledged likeness between the *Vita Nuova* and the *Canzoniere* is in their shared commitment to this kind of program for arranging lyrics. In both cases an intense awareness of the resources of genre is deployed to structure a collection in which the poet daringly acknowledges himself as *auctor* and — more daringly yet — as text as well. In the genre of the *canzoniere* from Dante to, I would venture, George Herbert's *The Temple*, the poet functions both as the maker, the *auctor* of his book, and in effect as the material of the book itself.

Under the guidance of Judson Allen, Paul Zumthor, Eugene Vance, Malcolm Parkes and A.J. Minnis⁷ we have recently become sensitive to the increasing importance of the human, rather than the Divine *auctor* in the literary and scholarly activity of Dante's century. Minnis detects its first symptoms in the "Aristotelian prologue" of the thirteenth-century commentators. There, the Aristotelian scheme of four causes which were thought to give rise to a written work made it possible to consider, under the heading "*causa formalis*" the method of treatment adopted by the human *auctor* in handling his material, his *modus tractandi* or *modus agendi*. "In the Aristotelian prologue," writes Minnis, "the *modus agendi* was redefined as the way in which the individual human *auctor* had chosen to express his personal revelation."⁸ Such a system made it possible to discuss the differences in literary method and style

that individuated authors, and consequently made writers themselves more aware of their own authorial personalities. Statements both by St. Bonaventure and St. Thomas exemplify this new perspective. St. Bonaventure recognizes the proprietorship of the *auctor* over his own work, and St. Thomas the subjectivity which may be one of the permitted formal causes of that work.⁹

In the famous opening passage of the *Vita Nuova* Dante describes the book of his memory — the *libro* which is co-extensive with all that he knows of his life — and the little book, the *libello*, of which the first words, "Incipit Vita Nova" constitute a rubric announcing this section, this new life, as a division in a larger work. Here the "I" of the poems is conceptualized first as a source of matter, and secondly as imposer of order upon that matter. Singleton as a result argues that the *Vita Nuova* would have seemed to a thirteenth-century reader like a volume of poems with two glosses: Dante has copied from the book of memory poems which he once wrote, and around which a first gloss has been written by another hand, that of God. Dante then transforms himself from scribe to commentator, and adds the second gloss, which includes for example the *divisioni*, Chapter XI, and Chapter XXIX.¹⁰ If we follow St. Bonaventure, however, we can take this a step farther, for the Saint distinguishes very conveniently the roles which seem to be taken on in the *Vita Nuova*. A scribe, he says, is one who copies the writings of others, adding and changing nothing. A compiler, on the other hand, copies the writings of others, adding material, but not his own. A commentator is he who copies his own and others' writings, but chiefly those of others, and only adds his own in the form of notes and appendixes. Finally, there is the *auctor*. He copies his own and others' writings, but his own take the principal place, and those of others are appended as confirmation of what he writes.¹¹ It is this proportion which is clearly maintained in the *Vita Nuova*. Dante is certainly scribe, and certainly *chiosatore*. But he is the author of both of the poems and the second gloss, and if the first gloss comes from God's book of the Universe, we must remember the pains Dante takes here and in the *Commedia* to make clear the likeness between the poet's art and the Creator's.

This likeness is implied in the relationship of *libello* to *libro*, which is not that of part to whole, but rather of model to original. That is, the *libello* stands in analogical relationship to its subject-matter. Through the agency of the body of spiritualized erotic metaphor afforded by contemporary amorous lyric, the *libello* of the "new life" is made to illuminate the *libro* of life itself. This dextrous act is made possible by Dante's confidence in the figure of analogy to organize experience. The *libello*, like the later *Commedia*, reveals the

structure of the cosmos as he believes it to be constituted, though in the *Vita Nuova* that cosmos has the charm of a miniature. The book in which it is exemplified is not the great volume of *Paradiso* 33, which through the agency of love binds up that which flutters through the universe like the Sibyl's scattered leaves, but one much simpler and more youthfully conceived. But the tripartite structure revolving around a central *canzone*, the three-stage progress of the soul from a lower to a higher state of being, and the cognitive function of the prose, all exemplify the serenity of a vision in which the experienced and transcendental worlds can be contained in a single and supremely expressive figure. For Dante, this figure has to make clear both the love of God for His creation, and the tendency of that love to explicate itself, to make itself intelligible. In the *Commedia* this love, endlessly explicated, binds up the scattered leaves. In the youthful *libello*, the poet is permitted a share in this creative power, as he shows so delightfully when he thinks of what his own poetic prowess might do: "Farei parlando innamorar la gente," (VN, XIX). The very ending of the *libello* itself is contrived to remind us of this, for when Dante after his miraculous vision resolves "di non dir più di questa benedetta, infino a tanto che io potessi più degnamente trattare di lei," he does so in order to prepare himself for the yet greater creative task, "di dire di lei quello che mai non fu detto d'alcuna." And in that act the "Sire della cortesia" of the youthful miniature will be transformed into "L'amor che move il sole e l'altre stelle."

I can say nothing here about Petrarch's reading of, and antagonism to, Dante that has not already been said by others.¹³ What I can do is focus the elements of that envious, yet emulative response on the generic issues already raised. In the *Vita Nuova* Dante, I have suggested, fused into a new kind of work a number of disparate elements, and his synthesizing gesture was made with a very creative awareness of the new prerogatives of the authorial role. Petrarch's *Canzoniere* constitutes a response to this new kind of work, one dominated by three leading motifs: a fundamental literalism, a classicising aesthetics, and a need to distance himself from his great predecessor which resulted in an apparent suppression of his image in Petrarch's works. In Harold Bloom's terms Dante was that poet with whom Petrarch had to struggle in order to become himself, and the consequence of such a struggle, as Bloom shows, is a willed repression of the original which paradoxically leaves its spectral traces everywhere in the later poet's work.¹⁴

Thus it is that in Petrarch's hands the lyric collection extends itself to cover the whole life of the poet, a structuring schema is at

the same time asserted and denied, and the narrative and analytical functions of the prose are absorbed into the lyrics themselves to produce not the explication of a text, but a continuous interior debate on its very validity. This disruption of the governing coordinates of Dante's synthesis results in a more than Dantean focus on the persona of the *auctor*, a focus which Petrarch skillfully dramatizes by keeping in constant doubt the status of the text which the poet both *is* and *is making*. His reasons for doing so he made clear in the well-known letter to Pandolfo Malatesta of 1373, in which he explained that the structural variety of the *Canzoniere* was the result of the "*instabilis furor amantium*" which its lyrics express.¹⁵ With characteristic literalism he turned away from Dante's analogical vision to transform the physiological condition of lovesickness as it was understood by the doctors of his age into a vision of the *moral* self.¹⁶ He achieved this by making the fragmentation, the *varietas* of the book its very *modus tractandi*.

Thus when the psychomachia between Amor and Virtute results in a victory for unreason, it marks the poet's submission to a love which expresses itself as a disruption of the poetic process:

Più volte incominciai di scriver versi:
ma la penna et la mano et l'intellecto
rimaser vinti nel primier assalto. (XX)

When he can write, the poems he produces are the *rime sparse* announced in sonnet 1, the scattered rhymes that not only recall the fragments mentioned in John 6:12, but constitute a pointedly ironic allusion to Dante's "*ciò che per l'universo si squaderna*." The poems in their isolation one from another mirror the fragmentation of their creator. They are "*seguaci de la mente afflicta*," and Petrarch makes their resistance to the imposition of a *modus tractandi* an integral part of the drama: "*Quai fien ultime, lasso*," he writes, "*et qua' fien prime?*" (CXXVII). The solitude of individual poems is restated in the solitude of the poet himself. Isolated by shame and regret, he can conceive of himself only as that most reductive of literary kinds, the *favola al popolo tutto* of his opening sonnet.

As this suggests, Petrarch's *libello* is not a model of the cosmos, like the *Vita Nuova*, but a model of the worldly, limited human psyche. In the *Vita Nuova*, a unifying method naturally emerges from Dante's metaphorically conceived universe. The *Canzoniere* however comprises a series of infinitely anxious discriminations. Just as the poet separates himself from "*il popol tutto*," so also he asks, "*S'amor non è, che dunque è quel ch'io sento?*" / "*Ma s'egli è*

amor, perdio, che cosa et quale?" (CXXXII). Instead of the continuity of the *itinerarium*, Petrarch offers the *dissidio*, that separation of the moral self into its parts which leaves him in perpetual search of the upward movement that might reconcile them. As Giuseppe Mazzotta notes,¹⁷ each of Petrarch's lyrics is a new attempt at that upward movement. Each new beginning — precisely because it starts again — recreates the rupture yet once more. From these many beginnings, only one possible ending can result. Where Dante's *libello* prepares him for his greatest creative task, Petrarch must, in his concluding *canzone*, swear to the Virgin,

Se dal mio stato assai misero et vile
per le tue man resurgo,
Vergine, i'sacro et purgo
al tuo nome et pensieri e 'ngegno et stile,
la lingua e 'l cor, le lagrime e i sospiri.

In this consecration, this purging, the gathering of fragments must be set aside for good; no continuity can link the old man with the new.

As an organizing principle, the concept of *varietas* is thus a defiant repudiation of Dante's hieratic schema in the *Vita Nuova*. Yet as I have shown elsewhere, *varietas* is an accepted classical aesthetic principle, endowing the works which employ it with an elegant plasticity of organization.¹⁸ And the term "variety" was used well into the seventeenth century to describe the plenitude of creation. Thus *varietas* brings with it the implication of order and fullness as well as the disorder of the *instabilis furor amantium* and the rhymes, scattered like the Sibyl's leaves, which result from it. This paradox is not ignored in the *Canzoniere*, which alludes persistently to metaphor and correspondence as modes of comprehension. Though the poems are scattered, there are 366 of them, a calendrical allusion of obvious importance. The exploitation of the number six, the number of mortality, is equally self-conscious. The earthly Laura is eventually transcended in the "Vergine bella" (*vera beatrice*, also) of the final *canzone*. The passionate moral certitude of the Babylonian sonnets and *Italia mia*, the very faith in the power of prayer at the end — all afford an alternative perspective on the drama of doubt with which the *Canzoniere* is preoccupied.

This double perspective can be seen even in the way Petrarch takes on the role of *auctor*. Petrarch views his whole life, in all its abundant diversity, as a text. But because this text is a fragmented one, he has to take on himself the entire burden of validating its vision. His task is not, as it is for Dante, to discover the style of

praise and thus exemplify the operations of the creating word, but to conquer his solitude and that of the poems by the heroic exercise of eloquence in the world of man. Thus his choice of the frailest and most vulnerable image of the poet's book, his renunciation of the *libello* for *rime sparse*, is only one aspect of his theme. Insofar as the work scatters its resources, not unified by analogy or by such cognitive devices as the prose, it is a mimesis of the poet's suffering in love. Insofar as it makes his pain intelligible to men through its eloquence, it constitutes a triumph over it. In part because of the history of the work's evolution, this goal slips in and out of focus in the *Canzoniere*. But in Book IX of the *Africa*, Petrarch makes his point clear in the prophecy of his future poetic role which Homer vouchsafes to Ennius; there the poet Franciscus is described as gathering together Scipio's exploits into a single poem: "Francisco cui nomen erit . . . corpus in unum stringet."¹⁹

Of the many dualities of the *Canzoniere*, the most human perhaps is its attempt to conquer by its own supreme mastery of structure the great architect Dante. Dante's *libello* is Petrarch's *rime sparse*, his *itinerarium* Petrarch's *dissidio*, his eternally creating word Petrarch's earthly, temporal laurel. But the self-conscious variation extends even further. In the *Vita Nuova* Dante, yet to become the greatest of exiled poets, portrays himself as a citizen, if only of the small circle of the elect. Petrarch is a solitary; within the historical fact of Dante's exile, he makes himself a greater exile yet. If memory is a book for Dante, it is a mere thread for Petrarch, and necessarily so, since his experience is conceived as a labyrinth. The *Vita Nuova* presents us with a city, one populated chiefly by beautiful ladies and "famosi trovatori" but a human scene nonetheless. In the *Canzoniere* Petrarch retreats to nature. "Solo e pensoso," he wanders the empty fields, fleeing every trace of man, and followed only by Love. Dante grows towards his Beatrice; in the *Canzoniere* it is Laura who changes and Petrarch who remains static, ever the sinner, graying though he may be. And Dante's confidence in language is countered by Petrarch's linguistic duplicity, in which every form of words seems at the same time to state and negate, and the search for eloquence produces a language so packed with allusion that a single word can flower with three, four, and five meanings.

That the *Canzoniere*, rather than the *Vita Nuova* eventually served as the master-exemplar of the Renaissance lyric collection is a consequence (fittingly enough) of its duality. Both Dante and Petrarch adopted the new role of *auctor* in such a way as to open its thematics, as well as its method, to their emulators, but Petrarch transformed the lover's self-examination into an open-ended task

well adapted to the searching age to come. Yet as poet after poet took up what Minturno in one of his sonnets was to call "l'opra del mio pianger,"²⁰ the continual re-statement which this open-endedness made possible led to a refocussing of the notion of the *libello*. Petrarch's scattered rhymes compose a series of individual attempts at the consolidation of multiple aesthetic materials, and into each one is packed immense possibilities for invention by poets increasingly aware of classical techniques of composition. Whether Petrarch was using with a full sense of its classical authority the topical method of composition or whether, with what he admitted was an imperfect knowledge of the ancient rhetoricians he was simply feeling his way towards it, for many of his heirs the *Canzoniere* functioned quite literally as a commonplace book,²¹ in which all that could be said about love was collected in a single *topos* or "place," ready for their art to unpack. Petrarch's tense response to Dante in the long run resulted in the transformation of the *libello* or poet's book from an analogy for the order of God's creation into the image of a profoundly human enterprise.²²

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NOTES

- 1 Adolfo Jenni, "Un Sistema del Petrarca nell' ordinamento del 'Canzoniere,'" in *Studi in onore di Alberto Chiari* (Brescia, 1973), II, 721-732; p. 721.
- 2 Domenico de Robertis, for example, refers to it as "il primo libro della nostra letteratura": *Il Libro della "Vita Nuova"* 2nd ed., expanded. (Firenze, 1972), p. 5. And Barbara Nolan states forthrightly, "The *Vita Nuova* has no predecessor or successor in mediaeval literature": "The *Vita Nuova*: Dante's Book of Revelation," *Dante Studies*, 88, (1970), 51-77; p. 51.
- 3 E.H. Wilkins, *The Making of the Canzoniere and other Petrarchan Studies* (Roma, 1951), pp.265-6, suggests that this arrangement was originated by Petrarch, but it is clear that the *Vita Nuova*, when considered as a lyric collection, also employs it, though on rather different principles, and in actuality there are exceptions in other early manuscripts, though they are probably the result of accident rather than artistic design.
- 4 See the brief review of various schemes by Mario Pazzaglia, "*Vita Nuova*," in *Enciclopedia Dantesca* (Roma, 1976), V, 1088.
- 5 It seems necessary to make this point because of the eventual transformation of "canzoniere" into "sonnet sequence" in Italy as well as in England and France, which has resulted in a certain amount of reasoning backward in an attempt to account for the genre.
- 6 Ms. B.N. Fr. 856, 288: "Aissi comensan li can d'en Guiraut Riquier de Narbona enaissi cum es de cansos e de verses e de pastorellas e de retroenchas e de descortz e d'albas e d'autras diversas obras enaissi adordenadamens cum era adordenat en lo sieu libre, del qual libre escrig per la sua man fon aissi tot translatat e ditz enaissi cum desus se conten." The collection is also found in Ms. B.N. Fr. 22543. See Riquier, *Las Consos*, ed. Ulrich Mölk, *Studia romanica*, 2 (Heidelberg, 1962).

- 7 Judson Allen, "Commentary as Criticism: Formal Cause, Discursive Form, and the Late Mediaeval Accessus," in *Acta Conventus Neo-Latini Lovaniensis*, Proceedings of the First International Congress of Neo-Latin Studies, Louvain, 23-28 August 1971 ed. J. Ijsewijn and E. Kessler (Louvain, 1973), pp. 29-48; Paul Zumthor, "Autobiography in the Middle Ages?" *Genre*, 6 (1973), 29-48; Eugene Vance, "Love's Concordance: The Poetics of Desire and the Joy of the Text," *Diacritics* 5, No. 1 (1975), 40-52; Malcolm B. Parkes, "The Influence of the Concepts of *Ordinatio* and *Compilatio* on the Development of the Book," in *Mediaeval Learning and Literature: Essays Presented to Richard William Hunt*, ed. J.J.G. Alexander and M.T. Gibson (Oxford, 1976), pp. 115-141; A.J. Minnis, "Discussions of 'Authorial Role' and 'Literary Form' in Late-Mediaeval Scriptural Exegesis," *Beiträge zur Geschichte der Deutschen Sprache und Literatur*, 99 (1977) No. 1, 37-65.
- 8 Minnis, p. 41.
- 9 Minnis, p. 42, citing St. Thomas, *In Epistolam ad Romanos* cap. I, lect. 1, and p. 44, citing St. Bonaventure, (*In primum librum sententiarum*), proem. qu. 4, conclusio.
- 10 C.S. Singleton, *An Essay on the Vita Nuova* (Cambridge, 1949), pp. 52-3.
- 11 Minnis, p. 44, and see Parkes, pp. 127-8.
- 12 See Piero Boitani, "The Sibil's Leaves: A Study of *Paradiso* XXXIII," *Dante Studies*, 96 (1978), 83-147.
- 13 See for example; Aldo Bernardo, "Petrarch's Attitude Toward Dante," *PMLA*, 70 (1955), 488-517; the argument and review of the problem by Marco Santagata, "Presenze di Dante 'Comico' nel 'Canzoniere' del Petrarca," *GSLI*, 146 (1969), 163-211; and Sara Sturm-Maddox, "Transformations of Courtly Love Poetry: *Vita Nuova* and *Canzoniere*," in *The Expansions and Transformations of Courtly Literature*, ed. Nathaniel B. Smith and Joseph T. Snow (Athens, Ga., 1980), pp. 128-40. See also G.W. Pigman, Jr., "Versions of Imitation in the Renaissance," *Ren. Q.*, 33 (1980), 1-32.
- 14 See the general argument of Bloom's *The Anxiety of Influence* (New York, 1973). In Bloom's terminology, of the six "revolutionary ratios" in which the work of a later poet can stand to that of an earlier, Petrarch's reaction to Dante would be that of *askesis*: "The later poet does not, as in *kenosis*, undergo a revisionary movement of emptying, but of curtailing; he yields up part of his own human and imaginative endowment, so as to separate himself from others, including the precursor, and he does this in his poem by so stationing it in regard to the parent-poem as to make that poem undergo an *askesis* too; the precursor's endowment is also truncated," (p. 15). Bloom (p. 7) quotes Wallace Stevens' letter to Richard Eberhart asserting his attempt to detach himself from the influence of Eliot and Pound; Stevens' words uncannily echo those of the famous letter to Boccaccio in which Petrarch contended he tried not to read Dante when he was forming his style (*Fam.* XXI, 15). For another application of Bloom's theory to Petrarch see Marguarite R. Waller, *Petrarch's Poetics and Literary History* (Amherst, Mass., 1980) which came to hand shortly after this paper was written and presented. A different approach to the same kind of problem in Petrarch is taken in Thomas M. Greene's "Petrarch and the Humanistic Hermeneutic," in *Italian Literature: Roots and Branches. Essays in Honor of Thomas Goddard Bergin*, ed. Giose Rimanelli and Kenneth John Atchity (New Haven and London, 1976), pp. 201-24.
- 15 Petrarch, *Variae*, ix.
- 16 As I have argued more fully in "Love's sweetest part, variety: Petrarch and the Curious Frame of the Renaissance Sonnet Sequence," *Renaissance and Reformation*, XI (1975), 14-23.
- 17 Giuseppe Mazzotta, "The *Canzoniere* and the Language of the Self," *SP*, 75 (1978), 271-96; p. 295.
- 18 See note 16, above.
- 19 Petrarch, *Africa* IX, 238-40.
- 20 Antonio Sebastiani, "Minturno," *Rime et Prose*. Ed. G. Ruscelli (Venice, 1559), *Rime* II, ii.

- 21 That topical methods of composition may have facilitated *copia* in sonnet-writing has already been hinted at by Sister Joan Marie Lechner, *Renaissance Concepts of the Commonplaces* (New York, 1962), p. 110.
- 22 And, it is probable, yet further solitude. Hans Robert Jauss notes, "The self-submersion of the solitary reader in a book as work — that is so self-satisfying that it 'means the world' for him — can describe the particular experience of autonomous art in the bourgeois era": "The Alterity and Modernity of Mediaeval Literature," in *New Literary History*, X, (1979), 181-227; p. 189.

Pascoli in Progress: The Contents of Box L

Anthony Oldcorn

What was in box L? Miscellaneous manuscript materials pertaining to the making of *Myricae*. The answer, to the reader anticipating an alphabetical correspondence, is disconcerting, to say the least. How, in such a world, would Ant and Bee ever have found their lost hats? Fortunately, the veteran *pascolista* is unlikely to be fazed, accustomed as he is to living with bewilderment, doubt, and suspenseful uncertainty.¹ Moreover, in the present instance, the Pascolian fog is quickly dissipated, our erroneous alliterative expectations undeceived, and the true Roman numerical value of the L stands revealed, when we learn that, though the bulk of the papers are in box L, an additional forty-seven relevant items are scattered here and there in boxes LI (*Primi poemetti*), LIV (*Poemi conviviali*), LVIII (*Poesie varie*), LXX (*Traduzioni, teatro, poesie sparse*), LXXI (*Poesie ed altro. Quaderni vari*), LXXII (*Poesie ed altro. Quaderni vari*), LXXIII (*Poesie ed altro. Quaderni vari*), (*Poesie ed altro. Quaderni vari*), LXXIV (*Poesie ed altro. Quaderni vari*), LXXVI (*Prose sparse ed altro*), LXXVIII (*Miscellanea. Cose latine ed altro*), LXXIX (*Miscellanea ed altro*), and LXXXII (*Carte scolastiche*). The source of our information is the introduction to Giuseppe Nava's exemplary critical edition of Pascoli's *Myricae*.² The Roman-numbered boxes constitute a relatively small part of the voluminous, and until now virtually unexplored, archive of Casa Pascoli at Castelveccchio di Barga in the province of Lucca. Amorously gathered, pored over, sorted, and in a limited way transcribed and published, by the poet's sister, Maria, the high priestess of the Pascoli cult, during the forty-one years by which she survived his death from cancer in 1912, the papers were taken over, upon her own death in 1953, by the Soprintendenza Bibliografica della Toscana. Though there has been a rough classification and division into the boxes mentioned (and within the boxes into Arabic-numbered envelopes), Nava's is the first conscientious and systematic attempt to catalogue and describe in detail the documents and their written contents, as far at least as the *Myricae* papers go.³

Heirs to the rustic "virtues" of frugality and diffidence, the members of the Pascoli household appear, first, never to have

thrown anything away, and second, to have been most vigilant in keeping all but intimates of extremely long standing at a stout arm's length. Beware of poet's widows, said Montale. And, in some cases, of their surviving sisters, he might have added.⁴ For this severe, jealous, wilful, capable, and utterly devoted spinster, puffing on her black Tuscan cigarillo, snipped in two for the sake of economy, must have been a formidable guardian indeed. Small wonder if the collection of documents has remained, for the sixty-odd years that have elapsed since the poet's death, almost as mysterious as it promises, when fully revealed, to be vast. But then, is it not strange that the published work itself, equally vast, of this, the greatest Italian poet since Leopardi, remains no less mysterious and capable of eliciting the most diverse and conflicting critical opinions? Books on Pascoli still usually begin with an echo of Croce's perplexed self-questioning ("Is it a bore? Is it a poet? It's PASCOLI!"), and even a book as learned, perceptive and enlightening as Alfonso Traina's study of Pascoli's Latin tends to assume from the outset an apologetic and defensive stance.⁵

It is as if the poet's own caution were transmitted to his critics. Caution? The word is something of an understatement when applied to Pascoli's approach to publication. So reticent was he, even in the face of the constant encouragement and exhortation, private and public, of such friends as Severino Ferrari and Guido Mazzoni, that he seems, like an extremely reluctant bather, almost to have backed on tiptoe, rather than plunging, into print. His first volume of verse, *Myricae*, did not achieve the form in which we know it until its fourth edition, published in 1897, when the poet was already forty-one years old! Technically speaking, the first edition of *Myricae* came out in Livorno six years earlier, in 1891.⁶ It is hard, however, to equate the meager dimensions of the *Giusti princeps* (a mere twenty-two brief lyrics) with the substantial volume of 156 poems which we know today. Moreover, the stimulus to publish came from a purely occasional circumstance — the wedding of a close friend. The exiguous commercial edition — which brought the total number of copies printed up to 100 — was an afterthought, dictated in part at least by the same straitened circumstances that led him to offer a couple of dozen poems in the first place, instead of the usual coffee or liqueur service.⁷ Ironically, even the pious hope that the proceeds of the sale of the extra copies might cover the costs of printing turned out to be vain. As if to confirm the author in his most negative expectations, many copies went in fact unsold. It would probably be wrong to interpret this public indifference as due to a negative calculus of the book's novelty. Nevertheless, it is true — and a further indication of the

poet's circumspection — that, of the twenty-two poems in the volume, only one ("Mare") had not previously been published elsewhere.⁸

The slim first edition, however, should not be taken as representative of the poet's total production to date. In addition to the twenty-one we have mentioned, a further thirty-five of the fifty poems added in the second edition had already appeared (prior to 1891) in newspapers, periodicals, "opuscoli per nozze," and other commemorative miscellanies, mostly in the previous decade, but the earliest ("Il maniero" and "Rio Salto") as far back as 1877. Some of them indeed had been printed more than once. Often the texts were subjected to extensive revision from printing to printing — an extreme case is that of "Romagna," whose evolution from an original "Colascionata 1^a a S. Ferrari Ridiverde" Nava studied in a previous article, only to conclude that the differences between the two versions were so great as to warrant our considering them two separate poems.⁹ Even after the publication of the third edition of the *Myricae* volume, Pascoli continued to publish independently (and to revise, once published) poems which would eventually find their way into the definitive corpus.

Myricae, then, was a book that grew. A second, enlarged edition came out, hard on the heels of the first, in January 1892, largely, it seems, on the insistence of Pascoli's original publisher, Raffaello Giusti, a bluff tradesman who, one suspects, in his subsequent strained relations with the poet, may have been as much sinned against as sinning. In this edition, the number of compositions increased to seventy-one. The third edition, dedicated to the memory of the poet's father, with illustrations in the decorative taste of the day, had 116 poems, forty-four more than the second, and was published in 1894. For the first time, after a new version of the preface, destined to remain substantially unaltered in all ensuing editions, the long lugubrious keening poetic rhapsody, "Il giorno dei morti," opened and set the tone of the collection.¹⁰ It was only with the fourth edition (1897) that the volume reached what was to all intents and purposes its present form. Only four new poems were added in the fifth (1900) — bringing the total to the definitive number of 156 — and, apart from a thoroughgoing revision of the text for the seventh edition (1905), subsequent changes through the ninth (1911), the last edition published in the poet's lifetime, concern relatively minor details of spelling and punctuation.¹¹

Myricae's growth, however, was qualitative and not simply numerical. No less than the microtexts, the macrotext radically altered its structure from one edition to another. The order of the

compositions was restlessly rearranged, as was their division into sections. The number and titles of the sections grew steadily, more than keeping pace with the corresponding expansion of the number of compositions. It is as if the poet, without a faith but unable to accept our existence as meaningless, for whom poetry meant the interrogation of "particular things," and for whom to write was to attempt to discover, by transcribing the signs of the phenomenal world, clues to the world of the absolute; as if we were convinced, on the level of the articulation of the whole as well as on that of the individual utterance, that the proper arrangement of the clues, the correct disposition of the random fragments, might yet yield a key to the Sense hidden by the senses, crack as it were the combination of appearances, and place him and us, to quote a poet whose debt to Pascoli is by no means merely lexical, "nel mezzo di una verità."¹²

The publishing history of *Myricae* can be followed in much closer detail than space allows us here in Nava's chapter on the printed sources ("Descrizione e ordinamento delle stampe," pp. CCLIII-CCCIV). The tables assembled there permit the reader to follow the vicissitudes of the volume, and of its constituent elements, from first to last, and to trace in detail how its present structure evolved. They illustrate the precise contents of each edition and how these contents were reordered as the volume grew. They also show which of the poems were first published separately, and where and when, and at what point these *disiecta membra* became part of a corpus.¹³ This is, however, by no means the whole story. Nava himself is quick to point out (p. XI) that his initial hypothesis of a close relationship between the date of first publication of a given poem and its date of composition was often disproved by subsequent research. The importance of considering the dates of composition of Pascoli's works rather than their dates of publication is one of the chief acquisitions of recent Pascoli criticism. Credit for convincing us of this necessity must go first and foremost to Furio Felcini, who twenty years ago was already insisting on the complex and tormented prehistory of the poet's *nugae*, on the rashness of a number of critical judgments based on the misleading evidence of the dates of publication, and on the pressing need for an exhaustive survey of the manuscript sources as a preliminary to any new critical reading of the poet's works:

Il mancato accertamento della cronologia dei singoli componimenti pascoliani e l'impossibilità di accedere alle varianti dei medesimi hanno contribuito, nell'ambito propriamente critico, al determinarsi e al persistere di conclusioni e direzioni spesso errate. Pertanto, l'ordinamento

cronologico delle poesie pascoliane e delle varie redazioni di esse (dagli abbozzi e dai primitivi disegni agli stessi rifiuti e cancellature) deve considerarsi come fatica preliminare a una rilettura critica del poeta.¹⁴

Most later critics have heeded Felcini's warning and have as a consequence been less sweeping, more guarded and circumspect in their critical pronouncements. No one before Nava, however, had taken his advice so completely to heart. For surely the signal merit of these volumes is that they make available for the first time to students of Pascoli's arduous program of self-construction that portion at least of his working papers that bears on the painstaking elaboration of *Myricae* ("opera," in Nava's words, "quant'altre mai sperimentale per i suoi tempi," p. XI). The definitive critical text of the finished work which opens the second volume is a milestone in Pascoli scholarship, an accomplishment that will remain standard. The contents of box L, however, are nothing less than a revelation, a new point of departure. There are still many other boxes in the Pascoli archive, whose contents remain a mystery. Let us hope that the quality of Nava's impeccable achievement, the fruit of almost a decade of study, will encourage rather than discouraging emulators.¹⁵

Nava's vade-mecum to the papers is articulated in two parts. The first, included in the introductory volume under the rubric "Descrizione e ordinamento dei manoscritti" (pp. C — CCXXVII), consists of a complete description of the appearance and contents of each of the 217 items kept in the thirty-seven envelopes of box L, plus 47 related pieces found in other boxes, along with nine additional documents from locations outside of Castelvecchio. Each item is assigned a number by Nava (from CPI to CP264 for the material preserved at Casa Pascoli), which will be referred to later in his transcription of the entries relevant to *Myricae*, thus facilitating cross-reference and allowing the reader to situate the fragments transcribed in their over-all context. Rarely were the original manuscripts dated. For the most part they consist, not of bound notebooks with sequential entries on consecutive pages, but of densely written loose leaves of varying dimensions, the largest measuring 210 × 310 mm., the smallest little more than scraps, half the size of a 3 × 5 card.¹⁶ The minute writing — not always the fine and meticulous hand on which Pascoli so prided himself — besides changing over the years, tends also to reflect his passing moods, now betraying the impatient excitement of inspiration, now a movement of discouragement, now one of confused agitation. The contents of a given page are often extremely

heterogeneous, sprawl higgledy-piggledy at all angles on the page, and are by no means easy to decipher.

The first conclusions of a general nature to be drawn from the papers have to do with the mechanics of Pascoli's working method. They indicated that, to the disparity between date of publication and date of composition, there must be added a second diachronic interval — that between date of composition and date of first ideation. Or, to put it more accurately, they show that the notion of a single date of composition, however approximate, is quite simply not appropriate, that the initial inspiration precedes the finished product in most cases by many years, and that, between the *terminus a quo* and the *terminus ad quem*, the poet habitually returned to modify his text on any number of unspecifiable later occasions. A corollary, suspected by one or two previous critics, urged by Felcini, and now fully confirmed by the evidence, is that the impression of a series of successively conceived entities, conveyed by the staggered chronological distribution of the various collections — *Myricae*, *Poemeti*, *Canti di Castelvecchio*, *Poemi conviviali*, *Carmina*, etc. — is to a large extent illusory. The *Canti di Castelvecchio*, as their common Latin motto suggests, are a continuation of *Myricae*. The distinction in Pascoli's mind between these and the remaining volumes seems originally to have been a fairly external one of "genre," based on language and subject matter. Each poem was conceived punctually. Its possible inclusion in a class was an afterthought. The interesting thing is that the afterthought tended to generate other poems of the same kind. And, while it is true that the poems in the later volumes, in contrast to the fragmentary and impressionistic *Myricae*, display a more ambitious architectural and narrative structure, the will to narrate (the narratability of the world implying some kind of guarantee of its meaningfulness) was present practically from the start — although initially it found an outlet, not in the Italian poems, but in the Latin *carmina* (which dealt, in any case, with an imaginatively recreated world to which the poet himself gave meaning).¹⁷

Now that Nava has given us access to the worksheets, the extent to which the growth of the different collections was synchronous and symbiotic can begin to be fully appreciated.¹⁸ One or two examples may not be out of place. Although the bulk of the *Myricae* manuscripts belong to the period after Pascoli had settled with his two sisters in Livorno, to the years 1889-93, one of the oldest of the surviving documents dates from almost a decade earlier, around 1882, the year he finally took his degree at Bologna and was posted to his first teaching job in Matera. It contains, in addition to details of a projected collection of poems which was

to have had the strikingly modern (Sbarbaresque to be precise) title of *Detriti*, the first draft of a poem entitled "Tiberio poppante." The poem "Tiberio," now one of the *Poemi conviviali*, was not published until 1896, some fourteen years later, in the Florentine periodical *Marzocco*; while, as a collection, the *Conviviali* had their first edition only in 1904. Or again, according to Felcini's tables, the publication in periodicals of individual exemplars of the narrative *Poemeti* did not begin until 1896, while the first collected edition (Firenze, Paggi) appeared in 1897. The famous "Digitale purpurea," however, was unknown to the public until it came out separately in March 1898, and it did not become part of the collection till the second edition (Milano-Palermo, Sandron, 1900).¹⁹ But, in documents which can be assigned with certainty to the year 1892, in the heart of the *Myricae* period, the title "La digitale," accompanied by the metrical specification "terzine," crops up not once but several times.

The contradictory nature of Pascoli's personality thus receives further illustration from these working papers, which can be said to be the scene of a struggle between the poet's method of "accentuato frammentismo compositivo" (p. CCCVIII) and a no less powerful "volontà quasi ossessiva di costruzione pianificata della propria opera" (p. XII). The latter is most vividly attested precisely by those long columns of titles which occur, alongside the other jottings, on practically every page. Difficulties of dating and ordering make it impossible to determine in each and every instance the exact status of the composition to which the title refers. It is clear, however, if from nothing else from the fact that the papers examined by Nava yielded, in addition to copious listings of the titles of extant poems, a further five hundred titles of poems (or books of poems), in both Latin and Italian, planned but never apparently completed (pp. CCXLI-CCLI), that the titles often refer to works existing nowhere else but in Pascoli's extraordinarily fecund and retentive imagination.²⁰

The second part of Nava's guide to the *Myricae* papers, the actual transcription of the poet's autographs, is found in the second volume, immediately after his critical edition of the definitive text of the poems, based naturally on that of the ninth (1911) edition, the last one published during Pascoli's lifetime. In this section, the editor provides, for each lyric, in the order in which it appears in the final text, an interpretative transcription of all of the notes and drafts relative to its composition. Insofar as a detailed reconstruction is possible — on the basis of external criteria (paper, ink, style of handwriting) and, more usefully, internal criteria (linguistic, stylistic, and metrical considerations) — this material is presented

in the order of its having been written. It is considerably easier, incidentally, to place the poet's notes in order than it is to assign precise dates to them. Some idea of the richness of the lode — and it is a strike bound to delight and invite the "critico degli scartafacci" — can be obtained if we consider that the text of the definitive edition, printed, with ample margins, one (usually short) poem to a page, occupies only the first 243 pages, whereas the text of the transcriptions, printed sequentially with no large blank spaces, occupies the remaining 326 (pp. 245-571). As we noted earlier, the descriptive catalogue in the first volume and the present transcription are complementary. Together they provide a clear picture of how these texts are related in their context to each other and to the rest of the contents of a given page. The amount of preparatory material varies considerably from poem to poem, but there are very few of the 156 for which no manuscript draft exists.²¹

There are interesting parallels (and perhaps even more interesting differences) between Pascoli's habits of composition and those of his contemporary D'Annunzio. Both poets start frequently from prose jottings of their acute sensory impressions of natural phenomena. Anyone, however, who has had occasion to compare the *taccuini* of D'Annunzio with the poems which derive from them, cannot fail to have been struck by the extraordinary coincidence, not only in content but in phrasing, between the initial observation (already heightened in tone, more incantatory and evocative than realistically descriptive) and its eventual utilization in the context of a finished lyric poem. A comparatively unvisited document of this spontaneous mode of composition is the extended fragmentary prose poem *Notturmo*, scrawled blindly on continuous ribbons of paper as he lay in bed convalescing from a partially detached retina incurred in a flying accident in 1916. For Pascoli, on the other hand, whose vocabulary and syntax are usually simpler and less exotic (in the "genere miricesco" at any rate), and who might at first blush appear to have been the more facile of the two, the elaboration of that original perception is anything but immediate and instinctive. Rather, it is the outcome of a complex process of trial and error, a long and meticulous exploration, in the presence of a constantly vigilant critical faculty, of its psychological "aura," its suggestions, implications, and "soprasensi," aimed at producing a verbal artifact charged with all the psychic emotion he had sensed latent in the scene.²²

Be that as it may, whether the poet's tongue produced "quasi come per se stessa mossa" immediately serviceable *iuncturae*, or whether the verbal elaboration of his insights took time and effort, both Pascoli and D'Annunzio are clearly modern, in the broadest

sense of the word, in foresaking the traditional oratorical and ratiocinative model of composition, a model which still appears, for instance, to have shackled somewhat the efforts of the young Leopardi. (Had he considered it, Pascoli might well have repeated, apropos of this aspect of the poet's technique, his well known remarks about another characteristic of his admired predecessor which he felt separated him from the great Romantic: "E io sentiva che, in poesia così nuova, il poeta così nuovo cadeva in un errore tanto comune alla poesia italiana anteriore a lui: l'errore dell'indeterminatezza. . .") Leopardi's prose outlines must be among the last examples of the tenacious survival of the classical distinction between form and content, of a prose content, that is, which it is the poet's task to versify and to clothe in modes appropriate to poetry and in an appropriate diction. I am thinking, not so much of the drafts of the patriotic *canzoni*, which, even in their finished versions, suffered from the imposition of a too conspicuous rhetorical structure, as of the outline of a poem so untraditional as "L'infinito," with its rationalistic insistence that all grammatical relationships be made quite explicit through a sustained periodic syntax.²³

Given the intricacies and obliquities of Pascoli's method, the poet's working papers contain many surprises, of which we can mention but a few, in the hopes of whetting the reader's appetite for more.²⁴ The ballad stanza, "Il lampo" ("E cielo e terra si mostrò qual era"), a much anthologized piece and too well known to need quoting in full here, appears first in the third edition (1894) and does not acquire its virtuoso companion piece "Il tuono" until the fifth (1900). A suspicion, based upon a reading of the texts, that the former is more poetically motivated, indeed central to the canon, while the latter, an undeniable tour de force, is to be classed along with the parasitic afterthoughts we spoke of earlier, finds striking extratextual confirmation in the minute of a preface to the third edition, never published, written sometime around August 10 1892, on the twenty-fifth anniversary of his father's violent death. The passage is one of many in which Pascoli obsessively reconstructs the circumstances of the murder, attempting to put himself in his father's place:

I pensieri che tu, o mio padre benedetto, facesti in quel momento, in quel batter d'ala — Il momento fu rapido . . . ma i pensieri non furono brevi o pochi. Quale intensità di passione! Come un lampo in una notte buia buia: dura un attimo e ti rivela tutto un cielo pezzato, lastricato, squarciato, affannato, tragico; una terra irta piena d'alberi neri che si inchinano e si svincolano, e case e croci — Oh! qualche volta io ripenso quel tuo pensiero e mi fremono nella gola le parole che tu non potesti dire — E non le posso dir io: ma mi stringono la gola e il cuore mortalmente.²⁵

"Il lampo," then, is no description of a natural phenomenon, but an impossible attempt to penetrate an inscrutable psychic moment, to see the universe through the eyes and mind of a dying man. Moreover, it states an inconsolable metaphysical conclusion. "Cielo e terra," as the singular verb betokens, are here a unit and mean "the sum of things," heaven and earth. On the point of death, they reveal their secret — a radical and dreadful emptiness.

The "ottava siciliana" entitled "Notte" is slightly less well known. This mannered interior with its overtones of medieval romance was among the twenty-two poems which made up the first edition (1891), and is indeed one of the earliest documented of the *Myricae*, going back, it seems, to 1883-4, when the poet was working on "Colascionata 1^a," dedicated to "S. Ferrari Ridiverde" and later to develop into "Romagna." It is in fact a spin-off of that poem, an initial version being found in the margin of CP17. In its final form, "Notte" (which for a while had the title "Rovaio") closes the section "Dolcezza," two thirds of the way through the definitive volume. It is evident, however, from the chivalric allusions, that it has a more casual connection with the early sonnets ("Rio Salto," "Il maniero," "Il bosco," "Il fonte," which appear together in the second section "Ricordi"), as well as with such poems in the posthumous *Poesie varie* as "Echi di cavalleria" and "Astolfo." It is, however, less stilted than they are, less obviously "literary" in inspiration:

Siedon fanciulle ad arcolai ronzanti,
e la lucerna i biondi capi indora:

i biondi capi, i neri occhi stellanti
volgono alla finestra ad ora ad ora:

attendon esse a cavalieri erranti
che varcano la tenebra sonora?

Parlan d'amor, di cortesie, d'incanti:
cosí parlando aspettano l'aurora.

The stylized wool winders talk, as they sit at their cottage industry, of deeds of love and courtesy and of enchantments. They may be listening for the hoofbeats of knights errant, but whether they are likely to hear them in actual fact or in their imaginations is not made clear. There are no clues to chronology, the adventures referred to have in any case passed into common lore and could be recounted at any fireside, the scene exists outside of time. Certainly, it would not appear to have anything to do with the fall of Troy in

1184 B.C. And yet, we learn from the drafts and a note cited by Nava that the "fanciulle" were originally "greche," and that the source of the poem's evocative final line is in the last lines of Book VIII of the *Iliad*.²⁶

One of the most famous lyrics in *Myricae* is "L'assiuolo." It was first published in the Florentine *Marzocco* on January 3, 1897. The memorandum book CP245 contains a first draft in prose, datable, according to Nava, toward the end of 1894 or at the beginning of 1895. In these notes, there is no mention whatsoever of the bird of ill omen and harbinger of death:

La luna c'era? io non la vedevo ma i grandi alberi neri parevano alzarsi e guardare verso lei. Un cielo chiaro, con poche stelle. Da un canto un nero di nuvole che lampeggiava. Poche le cavallette e qualche cicala, appena. Tratto tratto uno stormir di foglie.

Gli alberi parevano, grossi e toffus protendersi e stare in contemplazione. Campanellini d'oro minuti scossi sistri delle cavallette passavano a quando a quando: rispetto loro le cicale parevano rane.²⁷

The two aspects of the scene that are particularly insisted upon are the apparent animation of the trees, which seem to strain upwards towards the invisible moon — a motif twice repeated — and the contrast between the treble chirping of the grasshoppers and the *basso continuo* of the cicadas. What especially fascinates the poet's hypersensitive ear, in this instance, so to speak, of musical relativity, is the dialectic of sounds whereby the emergence of the bright high-pitched tinkling of the grasshopper so darkens and deepens the bourdon carried by the cicadas as to give the illusion of a shift in pitch and timbre on the part of the latter towards the absolute low in this symphony of night sounds, usually represented by the absent frogs. It even looks as if he had planned to build his poem around this conceit, since it is placed in the climactic last stanza of the only surviving verse draft.

CP94 contains the first two stanzas of the poem in an already advanced phase of composition. Below them are a series of notes and variants for the final stanza: "di sistri minuti/di piccoli crotali d'oro / scotevano i sistri d'argento / minuti così, che / pareva un gracchiare / una rana / la tarda cicala: "In addition to crowding over into the right-hand half of the page, the writing becomes smaller and smaller as we move down, until these last, interrupted, jottings are so tiny as to be scarcely decipherable, betraying perhaps the diffidence and lack of conviction with which they were written. Across the bottom of the page, starting well over to the left, and written in a large bold hand, probably when the poet returned to the page later, is the arresting comment: "Sì: ma allora non è più la

poesia, ma la spiegazione della poesia. Ci vuole abnegazione. Esempio: tintinni a invisibili porte." Brief and passing though it is, I do not think I am reading too much into this crytic self-admonition in calling it the best evidence the worksheets offer of how totally self-aware was the practical implementation of that symbolist poetic of reticence professed elsewhere in Pascoli's writings:

Il poeta . . . non s'impanca a dir tutto, a dichiarar tutto, a spiegar tutto, come un cicerone che parlasse in versi; ma lascia che il lettore pensi e trovi da sé, dopo avergli messo innanzi quanto basta a capire.²⁹

Contini is right to link the name of the so-called "provincial" Pascoli with those of Verlaine and Mallarmé. Let me close by reminding the reader of one typical statement by Mallarmé, in which he takes his distance from the poets of the Parnassian school. It is a statement which Pascoli would have had no difficulty at all in subscribing:

Je crois . . . que, quant au fond, les jeunes sont plus près de l'idéal poétique que les Parnassiens qui traitent encore leurs sujets à la façon des vieux philosophes et des vieux rhéteurs, en présentant les objets directement. Je pense qu'il faut, au contraire, qu'il n'y ait qu'allusion. La contemplation des objets, l'image s'envolant des rêveries suscitées par eux sont le chant: les Parnassiens, eux, prennent la chose entièrement et la montrent: par là il manquent de mystère; ils retirent aux esprits cette joie délicate de croire qu'ils créent. Nommer un objet, c'est supprimer les trois quarts de la jouissance du poème qui est faite de devenir peu à peu: le suggérer, voilà le rêve. C'est le parfait usage de ce mystère qui constitue le symbole: évoquer petit à petit un objet pour montrer un état d'âme, ou, inversement, choisir un objet et en dégager un état d'âme, par une série de déchiffrements.³⁰

This is how Pascoli would have talked, had he been born in the second arrondissement and not San Mauro. What was that you said about Cleopatra's nose?

Vassar College

NOTES

- 1 What Ant and Bee found in box L was a lost ladder, a lost lamb, and a lost lollipop. See Angela Banner, *Ant and Bee and the ABC* (New York, 1966), p. 57. Among the critics who have commented upon the poet's deliberate frustrating of our expectations is Cesare Federico Goffis, who speaks, for example, of "le continue incertezze e la voluta confusione pascoliana," in *Pascoli antico e nuovo* (Brescia, 1969), p. 314. But any reader of *Myricae* will recall the arresting and disorienting opening of the emblematic "L'assiuolo" ("Dove era la luna? . . ."), while the "Nebbia" invoked in a poem of that title from *Canti di Castelvoglio* (we

are perhaps reminded of "the yellow fog that rubs its back upon the window panels," so insistent a presence in the poetry of the young T.S. Eliot) curls no less sinuously through the Latin verses ("aut puer, / aut virgo . . . / circum per nebulam forsitan audiat / quae dixi gracili carmina tibia.") The examples could be multiplied. Pascoli's is a world of drifting obfuscating mists, of estranged perspectives, of wandering landmarks, of bewilderingly shifting viewpoints, a world in which we are invited to see our surroundings magnified through the distorting eye of a ruminant ("Il bove," "Il torello") or to cling to a blade of grass "per non cadere in cielo" ("Il vertigine"), a world in short in which we are continually thwarted of the reassurance of familiar bearings, while our sense of the solidity that underlies appearances is systematically subverted.

- 2 Giovanni Pascoli, *Myricae*. Edizione critica per cura di Giuseppe Nava. Autori classici e documenti di lingua pubblicati dall'Accademia della Crusca (Firenze, 1974), 2 vols., CCCVIII + 595 pp. Nava's first volume contains an historical and critical essay, "Storia di *Myricae*," illustrating the growth of *Myricae* and the poet's gradual discovery of his individual poetic voice. There follows a meticulous description of the manuscript and published sources. In addition to the critical texts of the poems, the second volume provides a precious transcript of the working papers, making available for the first time an extraordinary wealth of unpublished material. Nava's interpretative essay shows him to be as acute an exegete as he is an impeccable editor. This rare combination of "filologia" and "critica" makes him a worthy disciple of his teacher, Lanfranco Caretti. Since the publication of the volumes in question, Nava, well known to students of Pascoli even before their appearance as the editor of the best brief anthology on the market — Giovanni Pascoli, *Poesie*. Scelta con introduzione, note, appendice di prose e antologia critica a cura di Giuseppe Nava (Bergamo, 1971) — has published, in Enrico Malato's fine series, "Testi e documenti di letteratura e di lingua," an edition for non-specialists of the complete *Myricae*, with extensive critical commentaries on all the poems — Giovanni Pascoli, *Myricae*, a cura di Giuseppe Nava (Roma, 1978).
- 3 Carrying out her brother's intentions according to her lights, Maria brought out posthumously the *Poesie varie*, the volume of translations entitled *Traduzioni e riduzioni*, and, with the assistance of the Piarist priest, Fr. Ermenegildo Pistelli (the author of several literary works published pseudonymously under the name Omero Redi), the collected edition of the Latin poetry. She also added — without authority — in subsequent editions of the already extant volumes in the canon, one or two of the poems she came upon among her brother's papers (see n. 11 below). The poet's correspondence in particular, contained in the lower-numbered boxes, furnished her with valuable documentation when she came to compose — and later, at the age of almost eighty, after the original MS. had been destroyed in a Turin air raid, to reconstruct practically from memory — her monumental biography of Giovanni — see Maria Pascoli, *Lungo la vita di Giovanni Pascoli*. Memorie curate e integrate da Augusto Vicinelli (Milano, 1961). Further glimpses of the unpublished papers were afforded by Pio Schinetti, "Pagine inedite di Giovanni Pascoli," *Il Secolo XX*, (May 1912), 377-92; by G.B. Pighi, "Inediti pascoliani dalle carte di Adolfo Gandiglio," *Convivium*, XXII (1954), 712-24; by Carlo Pellegrini, "Esercizi poetici in lingua francese di Giovanni Pascoli," in *Studi in onore di Italo Siciliano*, Biblioteca dell'*Archivum Romanicum*, Vol. 86, Pts. 1-2 (Firenze, 1966), II, 963-73; and, most recently, by Alfonso Traina, "Poesia in fieri. Dalle carte del Pascoli latino," *Belfagor*, XXIII (1968), 517-31, and "Preistoria di *Thallusa*," *Belfagor*, XXV (1970), 71-80. A good proportion of these materials have to do with the Latin poetry. It seems that some of the documents published by Schinetti have since disappeared, in spite of Maria Pascoli's assertion (op. cit., p. 38n) that all of the writings were now in her possession. Antonio De Lorenzi, for example, was not able to trace the MS. of the play, whose title, being proverbial, has a Mussetian ring, *D'asse si trae chiodo con chiodo*, mentioned in Schinetti's article. See Giovanni Pascoli, *Testi teatrali inediti*, a cura di Antonio De Lorenzi (Ravenna, 1979), p. 10.

- 4 When it came to his relationship with Maria, even Pascoli himself had to admit the inadequacy of the traditional lexicon of kinship: "Io non so se più madre gli sia / la mesta sorella o più figlia." Their intimate acarpous sodality lasted a lifetime. After the death of Giacomo ("il piccolo padre") in May 1876, the poet became the oldest of the five surviving members of what had been, a few short years ago, a flourishing family of twelve. He demanded total emotional commitment from his siblings; with the result that in his eyes the family split symmetrically into the "good" brother and sister — Raffaele and Maria — and the "bad" ones — Giuseppe and (after 1895, when, aged thirty-two instead of leaving the house she shared with Giovanni and Maria in Livorno for their new house in Castelvechio, she chose to marry someone else) the once beloved Ida. Biagini, Pascoli's first biographer, claims to have had it from Ida that Giovanni, on his deathbed, murmured in her ear: "Ida, io muio vergine" — see Mario Biagini, *Il poeta solitario. Vita di Giovanni Pascoli* (Milano, 1956), p. 485. The possibility of any such confidence ever having passed between them was piously denied, on flimsy circumstantial evidence, by the devoted Vicinelli, in his supplement to Maria's life of her brother (p. 1020n.), but not until four years after Ida had died at the ripe old age of ninety-three. The interesting thing is not so much the truth or the falsehood of the report as the fact that Ida felt that some such clarification was called for. Giovanni's and Maria's lives together were filled in fact with bitter barren longing for their unborn children, a sense of unfulfillment expressed by Maria in the poems written by her and included by Giovanni in the notes to the *Canti di Castelvechio*, while an anguished aching meditation upon his own sterility produced — from "Il vischio" to "L'etera" — some of the starkest and most intensely felt compositions in all of her brother's work. Fr. Pistelli once regretted to Luigi Russo the odd circumstance that the poet of the "fanciullino," in all other respects a perfect Christian gentleman, showed in practice little love for or patience with children. The fault is far from uncommon among aging bachelors, and for Pascoli the schoolteacher there were a series of exceptions to the rule. They were not handsome children, but plump timid boys who must have reminded him of himself as a child. One of them was the Antonio Masi (nicknamed with professorial humor "Antonomasias") for whom he wrote the touching Latin sapphics (XXIV) which begin: "Nullus in sola mihi ludit aula / ora qui vultu referens paterna / natus in multos animum fugacem / proroget annos." That Pascoli had guilty unavowed incestuous fantasies of parenthood which directly involved Maria can be deduced from the truly singular short story, "Il ceppo," which first appeared in *La Vita Italiana* in 1897 (the year of the fourth edition of *Myricae*) and has recently been republished. See Giuseppe Zaccaria, "Scheda per il Pascoli narratore," *Il lettore di provincia*, 29-30 (1978), 5-15. I hope I will not be accused of being disingenuous if, in the face of Arbasino's hilarious and hair-raising revelations — see Albert Arbasino, "Cip-cip . . .," in *Certi romanzi. Nuova edizione seguita da La Belle Epoque per le scuole* (Torino, 1977) — I put in a word for the perfect innocence and candor of their relationship. In such an intimate and jealous labyrinth of reciprocity, the parental and filial roles are completely interchangeable. In one of his Latin epigrams (XXVI), it is Giovanni himself who becomes the tender father, Maria the little girl in need of someone to help her if she stumbles: "Ergo iter inceptum perges, soror: at quid oportet / auxilium precibus sollicitare meum? / Linquere, quod nimium est, gnatem me credis euntem / lapsantque piam posse negare manum?" (The "iter inceptum" by Maria, according to Gandiglio's *Appendix critica*, was the study of Latin composition. The distichs entitled "Precatio" (XVIII), which evoke the quiet ghosts of their lost parents, were originally composed by Giovanni, written out in a jumbled order, and given to her as a puzzle in metrical reconstruction. If the study of Pascoli's literary output teaches us one thing, it is that there are no minor occasions!) Mother, sister, daughter; father, brother, son. The conjugal role is the only one omitted from the catalogue. Unlike the nurturing and dependent roles, the roles of husband and wife are not reversible. Also, of all family ties, it is the only one which is

absolute and exclusive, impenetrable to the child. The mystery that Maria and Giovanni could not know. Without the biological promise of reincarnation, the sublime (and ridiculous) task the two set themselves — with heroic and terrible sentimental versatility — was to take the place, each for the other, of an entire family. Surely there can be no greater, that is more hopeless, love.

- 5 Alfonso Traina, *Il latino del Pascoli. Saggio sul bilinguismo poetico* 2nd. ed. (Firenze, 1971). The hint of special pleading was aptly brought out by Pier Vincenzo Mengaldo in a review, "Un libro sul latino del Pascoli," now reprinted in *La tradizione del Novecento. Da D'Annunzio a Montale* (Milano, 1975). Traina's is one of the most useful recent contributions to the interpretation of Pascoli's poetry; and not simply of the Latin *carmina*. So is the work by Goffis cited in n. 1, also ostensibly concerned primarily with the Latin Pascoli . . . Giogio Barberi Squarotti's *Simboli e strutture della poesia del Pascoli* (Messina-Firenze, 1966), and the chapter on Pascoli by the poet Mario Luzi in Emilio Cecchi and Natalino Sapegno (eds.), *Storia della Letteratura Italiana*. Vol. VIII: *Dall'Ottocento al Novecento* (Milano, 1969), pp. 613-683, are other recent attempts at a global treatment. Gian Luigi Beccaria's latest collection of essays — *L'autonomia del significante: Figure del ritmo e della sintassi: Dante, Pascoli, D'Annunzio* (Torino, 1975) — contains a wealth of documentary material and a very perceptive analysis of some of the stylistic effects achieved in the Italian verse.
- 6 The title "Myricae" had made its first appearance the year before, at the head of a group of nine short poems published in the August 10, 1890 issue of the Florentine periodical *Vita nuova*. The date, the feast day of St. Lawrence, is significant, since it marks the twenty-third anniversary of the death of Ruggiero Pascoli, the poet's father, ambushed and shot in the head as he drove home from the market in Cesena on August 10, 1867. Eight of the nine poems form in fact the nucleus of the 1891 presentation volume. The dedicatee was Raffaello Marcovigi, who had been a fellow student of Pascoli's at the University of Bologna. The friendship with Marcovigi was one of those which lasted. "Biondino," as he continued to be called, was the only person outside the immediate family on hand to assist the poet as he died, agonizingly slowly, in Bologna during March and April of 1912. The ninth composition in the *Vita nuova* group ("Sin che parlasti, il vento") was not included in the volume. It was published by Maria among the *Poesie varie*, as the third of four brief lyrics in the series "Primo ciclo."
- 7 It would be wrong on the other hand to exaggerate the fortuitousness of the 1891 edition. The majority of the working MSS. transcribed by Nava can be dated between 1889 and 1893. The year 1891, then, is central to this period of intense creative activity.
- 8 Although not previously published, "Mare" was by no means a recent composition. It is in fact one of the earliest surviving poems to be included in *Myricae*, the first drafts dating back as far as 1882. In verse form it is a "rispetto" and a rather good example of the interest in folk poetry that Pascoli shared at the time with Severino Ferrari. Adriano Seroni cites any number of instances from nineteenth-century collections of Tuscan folksongs, showing that the poem's first verse, "M'affaccio alla finestra, e vedo il mare," is one variant among many of a common opening formula for such compositions. See his article, "Ancora sul Pascoli delle *Myricae*," in *Nuove ragioni critiche* (Firenze, 1954), pp. 123-36. A previous piece by Seroni, "Per una storia delle *Myricae*," can be consulted in *Apologia di Laura ed altri saggi* (Milano, 1948), pp. 79-120. Though it is not the lyric of the title, interesting observations on the poem "Mare" can be found in Giorgio Orelli, "Per una lirica del Pascoli," *Strumenti critici*, 21-22 (October, 1973), 283-90. It is worth mentioning here that the eight madrigals so far composed for the "narrative" cycle "L'ultima passeggiata" — regarded by some critics as among the poet's most characteristic work — were not included in the gift edition for Marcovigi's wedding, for the simple reason that they had already been presented to another friend, Severino Ferrari, at his wedding in September 1886.

- 9 The published texts of many of these poems, as they first appeared, before being revised for inclusion in the *Myricae* volume, are reproduced in an appendix to Antonio Di Pietro, *Il primo Pascoli. Dai versi giovanili alla seconda edizione di Myricae (1869-1892)*, (Bari, 1963). Pascoli's reluctance to publish a collected volume of his poetry should remind us that, in spite of any reputation he may have to the contrary, he was an exacting self-critic. Much of his *juvenilia* was later rejected and never appeared in any of the collected volumes. To date there is no satisfactory comprehensive edition of these early works. The *Poesie varie*, published after his death by Maria — and now most readily consulted in the second volume of the ninth Mondadori edition of Giovanni Pascoli, *Poesie* (Milano, 1958) — are incomplete and inaccurately dated. Other poems are included in the "Appendice di poesie giovanili disperse" in Giorgio Petrocchi, *La formazione letteraria di Giovanni Pascoli* (Firenze, 1953); a few, omitted from the *Varie*, are in Maria's life of her brother, cited in a previous note; and one or two first saw the light in Vicinelli's *Giovanni Pascoli, Antologia lirica* (Milano, 1962). The new edition of Pascoli's "stravaganti" promised by Nava in a footnote to his article on the successive versions of the poem "Romagna" — "La storia di 'Romagna' e la poesia giovanile del Pascoli," *Studi di filologia italiana*, XXVII (1969), 188n. — will no doubt live up to the superb standard set by the present volume, and become a similarly invaluable contribution to our knowledge of these crucial formative years. Studies of Pascoli's difficult road to self-discovery as a poet, in addition to those already cited, include C. Curto, "La poesia di Pascoli avanti le *Myricae*," *Convivium*, IX (1937), 624-50; Pietro Bonfiglioli, "Severino, Pascoli e i 'goliardi'. Conformismo e opposizione nella scuola carducciana," *Emilia*, VII (1955), 238-44; Angelo Stella, "Sperimentalismo del primo Pascoli," *Paragone*, XII, No. 148, (1962), 3-27; Raffaele De Bello, "Dalla seconda alla terza edizione di *Myricae*," in *Studi per il centenario della nascita di Giovanni Pascoli pubblicati nel cinquantenario della morte*, 3 vols. (Bologna, 1962), III, 99-106; Antonio Domenicone, "La fase vitanovistica della poesia pascoliana," in *Nuovi studi pascoliani* (Bolzano and Cesena, 1963), pp. 63-76; Furio Felcini, "Introduzione" to Severino Ferrari, *Tutte le poesie* (Bologna, 1966), pp. 5-75; Ettore Caccia, *Pascoli primo tempo* (Venezia, 1968); and Giovanni Ponte, "La poetica di 'Foglie gialle' e la lirica giovanile del Pascoli," *Rassegna della letteratura italiana*, LXXV (1971), 71-92. Felcini has lately returned to this and related problems in his volume of essays, *Indagini e proposte per una storia delle 'Myricae'. Alle origini del linguaggio pascoliano* (Roma, 1976). Felcini is of course something of a pioneer in recent Pascoli studies. (See n. 14 below). For this reason, it is all the more regrettable that, in a work parts of which cover much of the same ground authoritatively covered by Nava, Nava's edition is alluded to somewhat perfunctorily and not granted the recognition it is so richly deserves.
- 10 The preface to the second edition, however, already quoted one or two stanzas from this otherwise unspecified work in progress. The private therapeutic value of the poem can be inferred from the ritual manner of its composition, to the accompaniment, we are told, of uncontrollable tears and sobbing, on the anniversary dates of the family's many bereavements. See Maria Pascoli, *Lungo la vita*, etc., p. 323.
- 11 For all practical purposes, the year 1897 marks the dividing line between *Myricae* and *Canti di Castelvecchio*. It was in that year that the first of the poems later to be included in the *Canti* began to appear in periodicals and elsewhere. The first edition of the *Canti* came out in 1903. The shared epigraph implies that they were seen in many respects as a sequel to *Myricae*, a hypothesis borne out by the evidence of the MSS. On c. 24r. of CP 245, a memorandum book used between 1883 and 1897, is a first mention of the title *Canti di Castelvecchio*, while c. 30r. contains a "Programa per il MDCCCXCVI" which includes the entry "2a di *Myricae*". This cannot refer to a second edition, since by 1894 the third edition was already out. Farther along, on c. 51v., we find the more explicit indication "*Myricae*. 2a serie o come i *Poemeti polimetri*," which must refer to the *Canti*. In the poet's correspondence, we find frequent references to "le nuove *Myricae*." The

editorial vicissitudes of the *Canti di Castelvoglio* were not nearly so complex as those of the *Myricae*. The order of the compositions stayed substantially unaltered from first to last. The opening section, from which the book takes its title, grew from fifty-two to fifty-seven poems between the *princeps* and the fourth edition (1907), and thereafter remained stable. The number of poems in the section entitled "Il ritorno a San Mauro" was never changed. In the fifth edition (1910), the eight poems of "Diario autunnale" were added as an appendix. Two of the poems included in the Mondadori vulgate — "Il compagno dei taglialegna" and "La capinera," both of which Pascoli himself chose, for reasons of his own, not to incorporate — were actually introduced by Maria in the seventh edition (1914). For the printing history of the *Canti*, see Nadia Ebani, "Bibliografia e apparato delle stampe dei *Canti di Castelvoglio*," *Studio di filologia italiana*, XXVIII (1970), 261-93. Her work is compatible with Nava's, as she follows an earlier article of his — "Bibliografia di *Myricae*," *Studi di filologia italiana*, XXV (1967), 211-22 — now absorbed into the present work. Her critical edition of the *Canti di Castelvoglio* is eagerly awaited. In the meanwhile, she has published the notes and drafts relating to one of the most famous poems in the collection, "Il gelsomino notturno," along with her interesting critical conclusions. See Nadia Ebani, "Il gelsomino notturno nelle carte pascoliane," in *Studi di filologia e di letteratura offerti a Carlo Dionisotti* (Milano and Napoli, 1973), pp. 453-501.

- 12 In slightly misquoting yet another poet, closer in time to Pascoli, and speaking of Pascoli's "long immense et raisonné dérèglement de tous les signifiants," I do not think I am making excessive claims for his gnosological subversiveness. Despite the promising beginnings charted in Teresa de Lauretis' intelligent article "Il Pascoli e lo strutturalismo: prospettive critiche," *Forum italicum*, IV (1970), 172-184, the structures of Pascoli's texts are still awaiting the full innovative potential of modern analytical methods.
- 13 This information was made available in part in the article by Nava cited in n. 10. For completeness and accuracy, it supercedes the account given by Augusto Vicinelli — "Storia bibliografica delle *Myricae*: I. Le varie edizioni," in *Omaggio a Giovanni Pascoli nel centenario della nascita* (Milano, 1955), pp. 9-25 — although Vicinelli does supply interesting additional anecdotic details. It might be well here, since the circumstance could lead to some slight confusion, to remind the reader that the useful tables (pp. CCLXX-CCLXXVI) of poems which have a history apart from the collection refer only — they claim to do no more — to poems eventually approved for inclusion in *Myricae*. The other poems published during this period, most of them printed by Maria among the *Varie* (but see n. 8 above), are not mentioned. Nava's second volume, to cite specific examples, has an appendix giving the rough drafts and definitive texts of three poems — "Crepuscolo," "I sepolcri" and "Il principino" — first published in periodicals, later included in the second edition of *Myricae*, then dropped from the third. They are not listed in the tables.
- 14 Furio Felcini, "Premesse a una rilettura del Pascoli," *Giornale storico della letteratura italiana*, GXXXVII (1960), 61-82, rpt. in *Studi per il centenario della nascita di G.P. pubblicati nel cinquantenario della morte* (Bologna, 1962), III, 249.
- 15 A publication like Nava's makes us painfully aware of how much remains to be discovered concerning the true Pascoli. The long-standing querelle between "pascolisti" and "antipascalisti," as is customary with such squabbles, generated more heat than light, since it was waged for the most part over a mystified image or an illusion. For a fresh and honest assessment of the poet and his work, Pascoli criticism stands in urgent need of two things: to begin with, new editions of the rest of his works, based like this one on a careful scrutiny of all the available bibliographical evidence, including the autograph MSS., possible now that the archives have become accessible and the exclusive Mondadori rights have run out; and, in the second place, that the MSS. themselves be published, as far as possible in their entirety. For many of the works these tasks are under way. We have already had occasion to mention Giuseppe Nava's promised edition of the *Varie*, and Nadia Ebani's work on the *Canti di Castelvoglio*.

In addition to these ventures, Elisabeth Piras-Rüegg published in 1974 her doctoral thesis, which consisted of the critical text and a commentary on "L'ultimo viaggio," the longest of the *Poemi conviviali*, and took into consideration the evidence of the MSS. at Castelvecchio. See her *Giovanni Pascoli: L'ultimo viaggio. Introduzione, testo, e commento*, Kölner Romanistische Arbeiten, Neue Folge, Heft 43 (Genève, 1974). She has pronounced her intention of going on to edit the rest of the collection. No doubt, in doing so, she will take account of Laura Bellucci's "Per l'Antico del Pascoli," *Studi e problemi di critica testuale*, n. 8 (April, 1974), 172-183, and "Il Cieco di Chio e i Conviviali 'omerici'," *Studi e problemi*, etc., n. 11 (Oct., 1975), 174-187. Maria Serena Ricci Peterlin — in "Contributo al testo dei *Poemeti pascoliani*," *Filologia e letteratura*, XVII (1971), 282-312, and "Intorno a un testo dei *Poemeti pascoliani*," *Studi e problemi di critica testuale*, n. 7 (Oct., 1973), 212-241 — has given us a critical history of the texts of two of the *Poemeti*, respectively of the "La sementa" cycle and of "L'asino." As far as the Latin poetry goes, it was soon felt that the collected *Carmina* (2nd ed., Milano, 1954), a collaborative undertaking whose general editor was Pascoli's devoted former pupil Manara Valgimigli, represented, despite its very real merits, something of a missed opportunity. Steps are being taken to provide more reliable and better annotated texts. A number of volumes have already appeared, inspired for the most part, directly or indirectly, by the work of the eminent Latinist Alfonso Traina. These volumes generally present the text of a single Latin poem, accompanied by an introduction and commentary. The first such publication was Giulio Puccioni's *Centurio*, initially in the *Annali della Scuola Normale Superiore di Pisa* (1964), and later issued in a separate volume (Roma, 1968), closely followed by *Pomponia Graecina*, a cura di Alfonso Traina (Bologna, 1967), the two *Saturae* (*Catullo calvos* and "Fanum Vacunae"), a cura di Alfonso Traina (Firenze, 1968), *Fanum Apollinis*, a cura di Emilio Pianezzola (Bologna, 1970), *Phidyle*, a cura di Paola Sommer (Firenze, 1972), *Senex Corycius* (*Cilix*), a cura di Cesidio De Meo (Bologna, 1974), and *Reditus Augusti*, a cura di Alfonso Traina (Firenze, 1978).

- 16 There are some exceptions. It is not unusual, for instance, for a few sheets to be folded in two and bound together with string to form an improvised home-made notebook. Furthermore, boxes LXXII, LXXIII, and LXXIV (each labelled *Poesia ed altro. Quaderni vari*) contain several commercially produced notebooks, many of whose entries bear directly upon the elaboration of *Myricae*. CP244 is a fairly bulky copybook consisting of 108 folios. Many of the pages are blank, and a number have been torn out. It appears to have been started in 1892 or 1893 and used for several years, at least until 1897. CP245 is a smaller memorandum book of 63 folios, with entries from the same period, dating predominantly from 1894-5. Richest of all in *Myricae* materials is CP246, a copybook of 74 folios used especially in 1891-2 and recycled later, in 1896-7. None of these longer documents refers exclusively to *Myricae*. Each indeed is a "mélange adultère de tout," in which it is something of a feat to sort out and catalogue the entries. Although Nava does not (as far as I can see) broach the subject, it is difficult not to suspect Maria, in her excessive zeal, of tampering physically with the papers. The extremely irregular dimensions of the scraps, their torn or snipped edges, their preservation in separate envelopes, all suggests that she innocently compounded the already almost insuperable problems of dating and ordering the material by tearing out pages, possibly breaking up whole notebooks, and cutting up individual pages in order to distinguish materials belonging to different collections.
- 17 On Pascoli's narrative bent, see Claudio Varese, "L'elemento narrativo nel Pascoli," in *Pascoli decadente* (Firenze, 1964) and C.F. Goffis, *Pascoli antico e nuovo* (Brescia, 1969), especially Ch. ii ("Le strutture pascoliane"), pp. 17-32. It seems, incidentally, to be one of the factors behind the privilege accorded to folklore and ancient myth and legend in his work.
- 18 On the anecdotal level, this ought to have been the message of the legendary three tables, though in practice the set-up has tended to be used, misleadingly,

to stress the *separateness* of Pascoli's various literary activities. That the staggered publication dates of the various volumes of the poet's *œuvre* were likely to lead us astray, and that the notion of a descending parabola petering out in a total pedantic withdrawal into neo-Latin poetry was particularly false, was pointed out by Adolfo Gandiglio in essays written as long ago as 1912 and 1914. See his *Giovanni Pascoli poeta latino* (Napoli, 1924), *passim*. Contini's comment that, given the variety and disparateness of the poet's ventures, the three tables were "piuttosto troppo pochi che troppi" — Gianfranco Contini, *La letteratura italiana*, Vol. IV: *Otto-Novecento* (Firenze, 1974), p. 130 — sounded a note of implied skepticism which is confirmed by the quite promiscuous confusion that prevails among the papers of the archive.

19 This is the edition reproduced by Edoardo Sanguineti in his impeccably annotated Giovanni Pascoli, *Poemetti* (Torino, 1971). In subsequent editions, the *Poemetti* were divided into *Primi* and *Nuovi*.

20 The typical effusion of Maria Pascoli's explanation of these lists of titles is remarkable for its anthromorphizing of the unwritten works — halfway between Myrrhine's unborn children in the *conviviale*, "L'etera" ("informi tra la vita e il nulla, / ombre ancor più dell'ombra esili, i figli / suoi, che non volle") and Pirandello's preface to his *Sei personaggi*. The passage is found in her introduction to her brother's unpublished dramatic sketches. "Ci teneva, li amava, ne parlava con grande compiacenza e ne seminava i titoli qua e là in foglietti volanti e ne' suoi repertorii quasi temesse che si potessero credere dimenticati." Giovanni Pascoli, *Nell'anno mille. Sue notizie e schemi di altri drammi* (Bologna, 1924), p. 39 (italics mine). For the recurrent theme of the "figli non nati," see C.F. Goffis, "La sopravvivenza fisiologica nei *Poemata Christiana*," *Belfagor*, XXII (1967), 681-95.

The original title of "Novembre" appears to have been "San Martino." At the stage represented by CP98 the title was "L'estate de' morti." This is, I think, a good example of the mnemonic function of many of these provisional titles, the final title being invented as an integral part of the system of the definitive text. Here, the working title epitomizes the poem in terms of the conceit which is to effect its closure, which, while it is by no means the poem's only justification, is nonetheless the point towards which it suspensefully moves. Were the finished poem to be entitled "L'estate de' morti," the surprise and satisfaction afforded by the epigrammatic ending would be lost. Even the earlier, less revealing, "San Martino" might lead the reader to supply the idea of a kind of summer before the poet wanted him to. The eventual title "Novembre" could scarcely be more restrained and non-committal. One of the first critics to recognize the importance of Pascoli's titles (rather than simply being irritated by them, like Croce) was again Claudio Varese in his *Pascoli decadente* (Firenze, 1964), p. 31.

21 There is no rough version at all among the papers of a score of poems: "Il rosicchiolo," "Pianto," "Il passato," "Nel cuore umano," "Il cacciatore," "Nozze," "Sorella," "Ida e Maria," "Nella macchia," "Vespro," "Stoppia," "In chiesa," "Il tuono," "Lontana," "Notte dolorosa," "Notte di vento," "Il bacio del morto," "Fiore d'acanto," "Viole d'inverno," and "I gigli." In the case of the apologue "Nozze," which appeared in print with the title "La rana e l'usignuolo," in two earlier versions, before being included in the second edition of *Myricae*, Nava prints the previous redactions as an appendix to the definitive text.

22 Nava's experience with the worksheets led him to two interesting general conclusions of a stylistic nature, which he was able to put to use in determining the order of composition of the fragments. In the first place, he discerned (and illustrated at length in the article on the two versions of "Romagna" cited in a previous note) a tendency on the part of the mature Pascoli to expunge lexical items with an archaic or literary flavor in favor of more current colloquial terminology. Secondly, it seems that, when it came to versifying an original intuition (often, as we have seen, set down in prose), the poet was wont to throw up, as it were, a rapid scaffold, consisting of the rime-words, with or without the initial words of the following line. The earlier stages among the drafts of a particular poem frequently display this characteristic phenomenon.

We are reminded of an anecdote recounted by Manara Valgimigli in his introduction to the collected *Carmina*. "Io lo ricordo a Messina gli anni che gli fui più vicino: scriveva in certe sue cartelle lunghe e chiare, con quella sua calligrafia minuta che sempre saliva in su verso il finire della riga. Una volta, buttato l'occhio a una di queste cartelle dove c'era una serie di esametri, vidi che alcune righe avevano poche parole e l'esametro era incompiuto. — O questi? — azzardai. — Sono le *columnae*, — mi rispose — i *fulcimenta*, le impalcature della costruzione; — e aggiunse, sorridendo: — Virgilio, a levarle tutte non fece in tempo . . . —" Giovanni Pascoli, *Carmina*, a cura di Manara Valgimigli, 2nd ed. (Milano, 1954), pp. XXXII-XXXIII. D'Annunzio's notebook for *Alcyone* has been published in part by D'Arco Silvio Avalle. See Gabriele D'Annunzio, "Dal taccuino inedito dell'*Alcyone*," *Strumenti critici*, Anno VI, n. 18 (June, 1972), 163-169.

- 23 The longer of the two surviving prose sketches for "L'infinito" runs as follows: "Caro luogo a me sempre fosti benché ermo e solitario, e questo verde lauro che gran parte cuopre dell'orizzonte allo sguardo mio. Lunge spingendosi l'occhio gli si apre dinanzi interminato spazio vasto orizzonte per cui si perde l'animo mio nel silenzio infinito delle cose e nella amica quiete par che si riposi se pur spaura. E al rumor d'impetuoso vento e allo stormir delle foglie delle piante a questo tumultuoso fragore l'infinito silenzio paragono." Giacomo Leopardi, *Opere*, a cura di Sergio Solmi, I (Milano-Napoli, 1956), p. 305. As symptomatic of the poet's concern for logical argument, I would draw attention to the string of circumstantial connectives ("benché," "per cui," "par che," "se pur") and to the appositions of the second and last sentences, all of which are eliminated in the final version, in favor of a far more intuitive and "poetic" syntax. The "verde lauro" was also replaced by the more homely (and so much more snugly Pascolian!) "siepe," almost as if, in this instance at least, Leopardi had anticipated the poet's censure of "l'altro [errore] del falso, per il quale tutti gli alberi si riducono a faggi, tutti gli uccelli a usignuolo." Giovanni Pascoli, "Il Sabato," in *Prose*, I (Milano, 1946), p. 59. The trees that were not reduced to "faggi" in the academic arboretum were of course reduced to "lauri," axiomatically "verdi."
- 24 I am currently revising an article, "An Errand to Nature: A Reading of Pascoli's *Novembre*," which discusses in passing the preliminary drafts of this famous lyric, and which I hope will be published later this year by *Yale Italian Studies*.
- 25 Giovanni Pascoli, *Myricae*, a cura di Giuseppe Nava, II, 261. For the sake of clarity, I have omitted a cancelled reading (a singular for a plural) recorded in Nava's diplomatic transcription.
- 26 *ibid.*, II, 487. The note, on a loose scrap of paper, is inserted in a copy of the second edition of *Myricae* in the library of Castelveccchio: "La chiusa è un verso profondamente suggestivo d'Omero. Chi non conosce il mirabile quadro che chiude la rapsodia 20 dell'Iliade? [Here Pascoli cites the Greek text.] Quei cavalli, ritti presso i cocchi, nella grande pianura, con la città nereggiante alle spalle! Io li vedo, e non ho mai veduto cosa così bella." The Homeric passage which the poet refers to (VIII, 562-565) is translated by A.T. Murray as follows: "A thousand fires were burning in the plain and by each sat fifty men in the glow of the blazing fire. And their horses, eating of white barley and spelt, stood beside the cars and waited for fair-throned Dawn." Homer, *The Iliad*, with an English translation by A.T. Murray, Ph.D. (Cambridge, Mass., 1924), I, 381. The date I gave for the fall of Troy is the traditional one mentioned in the *Enciclopedia Italiana*.
- 27 Giovanni Pascoli, *Myricae*, II, 450-451. The word "nero" in the third sentence was subsequently cancelled and "stracci" written in its place. Nava suggests convincingly that "toffus" is Pascoli's spelling of the French "touffus."
- 28 CP94 is reproduced in a photograph in Vol. I of Nava's edition, opposite p. CLXVIII. The recto, in addition to the draft of "L'assiuolo," contains the titles of various sections of the *poemetto* "La sementa." On the back are the words "brividi, / lagrime, / sussulti di gioia," which appear to refer to the opening sentence of the essay "Il fanciullino": "E' dentro noi un fanciullino che non solo

ha brividi, come credeva Cebes Tebano che primo in se lo scoperse, ma lagrime ancora e tripudi suoi." Giovanni Pascoli, *Prose*, I (Milano, 1946), p. 5.

- 29 *Prose*, I, 616. There is a fine analysis of "L'assiuolo" and of the implications of this remark of Pascoli's toward the end of Nava's introductory essay. See Giovanni Pascoli, *Myricae*, I, LXXXVIII-XC. Even before the comment was known, the poem had of course already been treated by Gianfranco Contini as paradigmatic of the qualities that place Pascoli with the French symbolists in the mainstream of the modern lyric.
- 30 Stéphane Mallarmé, "Sur l'évolution littéraire (Réponse à une enquête de Jules Huret)," *Œuvres complètes* (Paris, 1945), pp. 868-69. I incline to think that Pascoli's revolution was rather less unaware than the late Giacomo Debenedetti (a critic whose work I greatly admire) would have us believe. See Giacomo Debenedetti, *Pascoli: la rivoluzione inconsapevole* (Milano, 1979). As this article was going to print, the first volume of an important new edition of Pascoli's works, edited by my friend Maurizio Perugi, appeared in Italy. It will be followed in early 1981 by a second companion volume and by a number of volumes of Perugi's essays on the poet. See Giovanni Pascoli, *Opere*, I, (Milano-Napoli, 1980).

Pirandello pittore e critico d'arte

(con una lettera inedita)

Antonio Alessio

Per quel gioco imprevedibile e capriccioso del caso che spesso interviene nelle azioni umane per interromperne e modificarne il corso, Pirandello doveva abbandonare le occupazioni e gli interessi artistici preferiti per dedicarsi totalmente a quel genere a cui — in apparenza almeno — si riteneva inizialmente negato: il teatro. E doveva essere questo a procacciargli una inattesa celebrità.

A Lucio D'Ambra che — rovistando in un cassettone pieno di confusione alla ricerca di un quadretto pirandelliano — scopriva il manoscritto di *Se non così*, diventato poi *La ragione degli altri*, e subito lo proponeva a Marco Praga che entusiasta l'accettava per la rappresentazione a Milano, Pirandello diceva incredulo:

Praga darebbe la mia commedia? Ma no! Va là. Io non sono nato commediografo. Il teatro non m'interessa. E quei tre atti li voglio bruciare.

Se in quel baule a Viterbo Lucio D'Ambra non avesse insomma messo le mani, "tutt'un destino di grande scrittore sarebbe forse cambiato."¹

Pirandello non nascose mai, invece, il suo primario interesse, oltre che alla poesia, alla pittura, e ad esse diceva di voler ritornare non appena avesse potuto smettere di scrivere e si fosse ritirato a vita privata. Pochi sanno che un buon numero delle sue tavolette venne esposto in una delle Mostre sindacali romane ai mercati di Traiano² e che pure la sorella Lina dipingeva, autrice tra l'alto di una veduta della casa natale del *Caos* spesso erroneamente attribuita allo stesso Luigi.³

Mentre alla poesia pirandelliana si è vieppiù venuta interessando in questi ultimi tempi la critica, praticamente ignorato è rimasto il Pirandello pittore e critico d'arte.⁴ Eppure questi due aspetti non ci sembrano affatto trascurabili, sia perchè testimoniano la presenza del professionista e non del comune dilettante, sia perchè, trovandosi oltretutto in un costante, sintonico rapporto, permettono di scoprire un'altra faccia del grande prisma pirandelliano.

Avemmo già modo recentemente di analizzare come la pittura avesse una diretta influenza sulla tecnica narrativa di parecchie novelle.⁵ La pittura, per Pirandello, non costituiva un mezzo per sottrarsi alle tribolazioni della vita quotidiana, né si riduceva ad un semplice passatempo. Ovunque andava, soprattutto d'estate, si portava dietro la scatola dei colori e fermava sulle tavolette di cui era sempre fornito le impressioni che la natura gli destava, apprezzandone la bellezza ma ancor più cercando di penetrarne il significato e il mistero. L'osservazione della natura lo induceva piuttosto a meditare che a sviarlo. Un giorno, dopo aver osservato un declivio folto d'alberi ed aver definito, contrariamente al solito, *stupida* la natura, a chi gli chiedeva perchè mai allora la dipingesse rispondeva: "E già . . . è proprio questo . . ." subito riprendendo a dipingere con intensità.⁶

Che di ricerca minuta, di studio severo e non superficiale o impressionistico si trattasse, lo può testimoniare la misura delle tavolette su cui generalmente preferiva lavorare: quadretti di quindici centimetri di larghezza e dieci di altezza ai quali si impegnava anche per tre mesi con passione e amore. Al ritorno dalla villeggiatura a Roma, la prima cosa che mostrava a Lucio D'Ambra non era il manoscritto di qualche commedia, ma il quadro a cui aveva intesamente lavorato.⁷

Se le circostanze gli stimolavano l'estro poteva completare l'opera anche in tempo brevissimo. Un pomeriggio del luglio 1919 a Viareggio, appena il figlio Fausto (alle sue prime prove di pittore) ebbe cancellato con un colpo di spatola un grosso ritratto ad olio della signora Frateili che aveva fatto e del quale era scontento, Pirandello intervenne dicendo:

Hai scomodato tanti giorni la signora per niente? Dammi i colori e una tavoletta: farò io il ritratto.

Esso fu completato nel giro di due ore con grande soddisfazione del Nostro.⁸

La domenica Pirandello la trascorreva spesso in accese gare di pittura con l'amico e scrittore siciliano Ugo Fleres (più tardi diventato Direttore della Galleria nazionale d'arte moderna) sotto gli occhi giudicatori e severi di Giustino Ferri e G.A. Cesareo.

Per chi ha familiarità con l'opera drammaturgica del Pirandello potrà non poco sorprendere il soggetto dei suoi quadri. Nulla di torturato, di drammatico, di grottesco, di espressionistico. I temi e le formule a cui la fama di Pirandello è comunemente (e sbrigativamente) limitata non sono minimamente riscontrabili nelle opere pittoriche. Tranne qualche rara eccezione, come in un piccolo autoritratto giovanile diabolico o nel ritratto alla moglie già alle

prese col suo male, nulla nei quadri che possa indicare anche lontanamente il futuro drammaturgo.

Il genere di questa pittura, fatta essenzialmente di dolci paesaggi, non dovrebbe, tuttavia, costruire una grossa sorpresa qualora si considerasse che accanto al Pirandello tragico-ironico, comico-grottesco delle novelle esiste un Pirandello di squisita sensibilità poetica e umana, con una profonda vena malinconica, dolorosa, spoglia di ogni residuo cerebrale. Nulla di contraddittorio in tutto questo, quanto piuttosto la testimonianza di un'anima non certamente chiusa, ma pronta a riflettere le più vaste esperienze della vita, sensibilissima tanto alle laboriose ed intricate operazioni della mente come a quelle semplici del cuore.

Anche quei pochi paesaggi apparsi eccezionalmente in stampa,⁹ pur nella difettosa riproduzione che ostacola l'analisi e la valutazione dei colori e della tonalità, testimoniano più che a sufficienza la presenza dell'uomo di mestiere.

La sicurezza anche prospettica del disegno, come nel quadro del "Campanile," la spigliatezza del "Paesaggio" con gli alberi (di pretto stampo macchiaiolo), o il quadro "Cipressi" di Soriano al Cimino, suggestivo col cielo luminoso e la massa scura dei cipressi in controluce: delicati contrasti di luci e di ombre; in complesso vedute serene che ovviamente lo conquistavano e l'ispiravano e che Pirandello ritraeva con amore e soprattutto tanta umiltà.

L'onestà dell'uomo, la serietà del professionista che lo portavano a dire: "Non ho ancora la mano . . . ma quando avrò sessant'anni e potrò lavorare . . ."¹⁰ le troviamo confermate nelle sue recensioni d'arte.

Questa particolare attività critica del Pirandello è circoscritta agli anni 1895-96 e non supera la decina di articoli, sette dei quali apparvero in occasione dell'Esposizione delle Belle Arti a Roma. Dopo tale data questa attività di Pirandello cessa, segno che gli impegni letterari dovevano da quel momento definitivamente assorbirlo.

Parecchi critici pirandelliani avranno una grossa sorpresa nello scoprire un Pirandello tenace oppositore di un'arte basata esclusivamente sulla riflessione. Chi ancora si ostinasse a negare alla drammaturgia pirandelliana la forte ed essenziale componente umana limitandola ad un'operazione o ad un gioco puramente cerebrale, troverà qui una clamorosa smentita. Nulla è più contrario a Pirandello di un'arte in cui la riflessione prevalga sull'ispirazione e sul sentimento, la volontà sull'estro. È Pirandello stesso a denunciare tale pericolo:

L'opera d'arte oggi non nasce più, per così dire, ma vien fatta; è insomma spesso più artificio che arte, artificio più o meno armonico e integrato con l'idea preconcepita e che può anche contentare e piacere, secondo una estimativa fatta a base di teorie più che di sentimento. . . . Lo spirito moderno è compenetrato tutto e signoreggiato dalla critica. . . . L'artificio ben meditato e ben condotto finisce col prevalere sull'arte semplice e pura. Quante volte, per esempio, di questi giorni, non abbiamo sentito giudicar questa volgare, perchè spontanea e chiara; e nobile quello perchè raffinato e non comprensibile a prima vista?¹¹

Questa illuminante, e per certi aspetti sorprendente, rivelazione, dovrebbe definitivamente portare alla rettificazione di alcuni errori di prospettiva tuttora accarezzati, a temperare certe interpretazioni razionali troppo esclusivistiche.

Circa l'Esposizione delle Belle Arti a Roma, Pirandello non si limita al consueto, breve servizio giornalistico-informativo, ma dà una critica particolareggiata che egli articola in ben sette parti distribuite in un arco di tempo di quattro mesi. Egli non manca di analizzare e commentare delle opere nelle varie sale e in rapporto alla luce, sulla scelta dei pittori alcuni dei quali, secondo lui, sarebbero decisamente inferiori alla fama; allo stesso modo lamenta la mancanza, pur tra le grosse presenze, di alcuni tra i più celebrati nomi.

Questa attenzione anche al lato organizzativo lo porterà, in un altro servizio, a denunciare apertamente il carattere e gli scopi puramente commerciali e non artistici di una galleria.¹²

I quadri vengono giudicati, innanzitutto, in rapporto all'ambiente, alla relazione che essi sanno stabilire col visitatore. Dei pittori, salvo i nuovi, egli dimostra di possedere già una salda conoscenza che gli permette di stabilire immediati confronti con opere precedenti. Scarsi ma sicuri anche i riferimenti alle scuole straniere:

Il Coleman ha voluto imitar servilmente una certa pittura inglese di fisionomia quattrocentesca, guardando la campagna romana con gli occhi del Leighton.¹³

Entrando nel merito specifico del quadro, Pirandello non nasconde mai i criteri che lo portano al giudizio. Partendo dalla definizione, invero un po' generalizzante, che ogni opera d'arte dovrebbe *entrare nei confini dell'arte e del discutibile*, incomincia con l'escludere quei temi che non abbiano pertinenza con l'esperienza diretta, con la vita. Ne segue che la pittura non deve ridursi ad una copia pura e semplice della realtà, per quanto minuta e precisa essa possa essere. Dell'opera di Raimondo Turquets pur apprezzando, al pari di tutto il pubblico, l'accuratezza e la finitezza dei minuti accessori, non può fare a meno di commentare:

Questo quadretto si direbbe quasi una sfida alla macchina fotografica. Ma, e poi? La rappresentazione del Turquets è così comune e vuota d'ogni concetto. . . . Le insignificanti e fastidiose minuziosità vanno a scapito dell'impressione della realtà . . . come un ottimo disegno vestito scrupolosamente di color diremmo quasi domenicali.¹⁴

Per la stessa ragione non lo interessano le opere che abbiano una funzione puramente decorativa, come le nature morte:

Troppi studi di fiori e di frutta, margherite gialle e malvoni e gigli e crisantemi, uva e mele e cocomeri e melloni: c'è da morire d'asfissia e d'indigestione.¹⁵

Né dovrebbe aver posto, nel regno dell'arte, l'improvvisazione:

Essa può tutt'al più dimostrare una felice attitudine . . . ma vera arte non è.¹⁶

Allo stesso modo non devono trovare posto i cosiddetti "studi," le opere non compiute:

Al pittore che li presenta la commissione dovrebbe rispondere così: Avete studiato? Benissimo. Ora fate il quadro, e poi ne ripareremo.¹⁷

Pur considerando Camillo Innocenti un pittore "tra i più straordinariamente dotati," lo trova incapace di finire il quadro. Il suggello dell'arte sta, invece, proprio:

nel saper finire, nel saper rendere cioè fino all'ultimo l'immagine concepita, senza toglierle con lo studio, con la meditazione, con la minuta cura quella freschezza di vita e quella forza, con cui essa prima si è presentata alla mente o davanti agli occhi.¹⁸

L'arte, per Pirandello, sembrerebbe insomma articolarsi nel felice e armonioso connubio di ispirazione, meditazione, sentimento e compiutezza.

Con la sincerità, al pittore si richiede originalità. Egli non deve lasciarsi condizionare dalle mode passeggiere, né permettere che le sue facoltà artistiche subiscano l'influenza d'alcuno:

poiché anche quella dei grandi è sempre nociva e conduce ad annullare nei seguaci ogni personalità.¹⁹

Noi domandiamo: Mostra davvero d'intender gli antichi chi servilmente gli imita fin nelle patine? . . . E non furon nuovi gli antichi nel tempo in cui vissero? Da quando in qua rinnovar l'arte significa invecchiarla? Non farebbe ridere lo scrittore che si mettesse oggi a imitare nella sua prosa lo

stile e il nesso sintattico e tutti gli arcaismi degli antichi autori, come se per secoli la favella non si fosse man mano sviluppata con gli usi mutevoli, e i bisogni nuovi e lo spirito dei tempi?²⁰

Come l'arte deve continuamente rinnovarsi, l'artista deve ingegnarsi

come meglio sa e può, di trovar vie nuove all'arte, evitando le solite opere anche ben riuscite che nulla cercano e, spesso, nulla vogliono. Nulla nuoce tanto all'arte, quanto il ripetere continuamente gli stessi motivi.²¹

La coerenza a questi chiari principi può essere esemplificata dall'analisi che Pirandello fa delle opere del Pellizza e del Morbelli. Del divisionismo Pirandello non nasconde, a rigor di logica, certe iniziali riserve:

Questò nuovo artificio, per quanto minutamente eseguito, non sarà mai nascosto dalla distanza con cui bisogna guardare il quadro punteggiato; la distanza, se permette all'occhio di cogliere l'effetto luminoso, gli impedisce poi di saziarsi del dipinto; né l'effetto stesso riesce mai a compensarsi dell'aridità a forza derivante dall'evitato impasto e dallo stento manifesto nella modellatura delle figure

dove il risultato artistico perderebbe il necessario impatto per la tecnica rallentatrice che la scuola divisionista necessariamente impone. Nonostante ciò, la sensibilità dell'artista e l'onestà dell'uomo non lasciano sfuggire a Pirandello la serietà e la funzione dell'esperimento:

Ad ogni modo, tentare è bene; e la critica, notando i difetti e le pecche dei nuovi tentativi, anziché scoraggiare, dovrebbe spronar l'artista a superarli per maggior gloria di se stesso e dell'arte.²²

Al Pellizza il Pirandello preferisce l'altro allessandrino, il Morbelli, perchè questi non applicherebbe la teoria del divisionismo col rigore dell'altro:

L'aridità del Morbelli . . . è compensata da un coefficiente importantissimo trascurato dagli altri quasi sempre in tentativi di simile genere, vogliamo dire, dal sentimento. . . .

Il Morbelli saprebbe raffigurare l'immagine del sentimento

indipendentemente . . . da ogni tecnica, e se sceglie quella dei divisionisti del colore è solo perchè la crede più efficace e meglio adatta ai fini dell'arte sua, e perchè complimentarista convinto.²³

Per Pirandello la tecnica non deve mai sopravanzare, in breve, il sentimento e l'ispirazione. Se all'artista si richiede di

essere uno, di esser lui, di raggiungere ad ogni costo un'espressione così personale e forte, che possa resistere al violento urto del tempo, egli dev'essere anche vario, perchè lo stesso danno che occorre a chi si metta a seguir l'orme di un altro, occorre a chi si adagia in una forma a lui solita e non sa veder più nulla, più nulla tentare per rinnovarsi. Effetti inevitabili di questa ripetizione sono la sazietà nel pubblico e l'esaurimento dell'artista.²⁴

Dove manca insomma la libertà, la spontaneità o si impongono modelli, il processo creativo viene necessariamente a soffrirne. Sarebbe questa la ragione dell'insuccesso del concorso di pittura e scultura del pensionato artistico governativo.²⁵

In difesa delle sue opinioni Pirandello non esita a schierarsi contro la critica più qualificata o il gusto corrente del pubblico. Alle lodi del quadro "Tramonto" di Angelo dell'Oca Bianca da parte di un critico ("una donna!", precisa Pirandello) il quale facendo suo il giudizio di parecchi esperti lo considera il più bel quadro dell'Esposizione, Pirandello, specificandone i difetti, risponde:

Oh, no davvero, signora, no davvero! Non creda a certi artisti. "Tramonto" non è forse neanche un bel quadro, tanto meno poi il più bello dell'Esposizione.²⁶

Di una tela Pirandello discute la qualità del tessuto, l'impasto dei colori, sensibilissimo agli effetti della luce. Del quadro "Vespro" del Ferraguti in cui compaiono delle figure in piedi col capo chino e piegato, come recitando una preghiera, Pirandello nota che se si analizza la luce:

sorge spontanea l'osservazione che la campana della chiesa invisibile ha avuto troppa fretta di sonar l'Ave.²⁷

Di fronte a un quadro di Gustavo Simoni esprime repulsione e disgusto:

Un'orgia volgarissima di rosso e di gialloni.²⁸

Dello Shuster-Woldan nota una Madonna che, se perfetta nel disegno,

ha tanta forza di rilievo sul cielo inverosimile, azzurro carico, senz'aria, innanzi al quale il critico si domanda che mai il pittore abbia voluto significare.²⁹

Di Francesco Lojacono, che pure è annoverato tra i primi paesisti d'Italia, Pirandello non nasconde la delusione per la tela "D'estate in villa." Ne riconosce, è vero, meraviglioso il disegno e superbo il colore del banano rappresentato, ma infelicissime e povere le figure. Trova soprattutto difettosa la luce:

Fortissima, anzi violenta, è vero, è la luce in estate; ma è luce e non lucentezza, come in questa tela. Rammentiamo d'avere in qualche altro suo quadro notato il difetto medesimo: la luce del sole par veduta dal pittore come attraverso a una lente intensissima.³⁰

Talvolta il sentimento drammatico di una scena è reso con tanta sincerità, ma non sempre la fattura risponde "alla forza della concezione," come nel quadro di Natale Attanaso, "L'Ospedale," ammiratissimo dal pubblico, in cui però, per Pirandello, il colore "troppo debole e piano" contrasta con "la rappresentazione dell'ambiente."

Per alcuni quadri non può evitare l'ironia, né nascondere l'imbarazzo:

Ed ora, per carità di prossimo, facciamo le viste di non accorgerci di due tele antipaticissime di Fausto Zonaro . . . un prato verde tutto d'una tinta. . . . Andiamo via con gli occhi bassi da questa sala, in cui dei trentotto lavori esposti, la Commissione avrebbe potuto benissimo eliminar quasi la metà.³¹

Non sfuggono a Pirandello le disarmonie e gli squilibri. Del quadro "Cardo selvatico" del Vizzotti-Alberti, se ammira la "simpaticissima macchia del colore" ne rileva la "pochissima cura del disegno." Da una parte apprezza "la grazia e la genialità nel sentimento e nella concezione," dall'altra nota che una gamba della contadina raffigurata appare quasi rotta nel ginocchio.³²

Dove, però, le opere rispondono al suo modello artistico e al suo gusto, Pirandello non risparmia l'elogio e la più viva ammirazione. Si tratta quasi sempre di lavori non di grande impegno ma che rivelano, con una squisita sensibilità, consonanza di elementi e precisione di disegno. Così alle opere di Aristide Sartorio riconosce:

una fisionomia tutta propria, col carattere personale d'una prodigiosa finezza, d'una gentilezza incantevole e insuperabile nel colore. Non cercate in lui la forza; egli può darvi invece l'armonia di questa sua fantastica "Sirena" e il pastorale idillio di "Ninfa."

"Ninfa," "Val Crescenza," "A ponte Salario," son pastelli e rappresentano scene pastorali. Il Sartorio non fu mai più fino, più morbido, più intenso e sincero di così! In "Val Crescenza" si respira proprio la pace rurale e la fragranza del verde pascolo; in "Ninfa" par sentire brivido che

arriccia l'acqua azzurra dello stagno e piega le canne, mentre l'armento pasce prono sulla riva e il pastore trae il molle e malinconico accordo nasale della cornamusa.³³

Riaffiora anche qui l'amore per la dolcezza del paesaggio che Pirandello rifletteva nelle sue tele e in alcune delle più belle pagine delle sue novelle, distinguendo sempre, tuttavia, la freschezza della concezione dal sentimentalismo e dall'oleografia. In genere è il quadretto in apparenza meno pretenzioso a rivelare le maggiori qualità artistiche. Questi giudizi pirandelliani sull'arte rimarranno inalterati.

Nella lettera al figlio Fausto che seguirà il presente articolo e scritta trent'anni dopo la stesura delle recensioni, Pirandello ribadisce e sintetizza quanto mai vigorosamente questo suo pensiero estetico.

Oltre ad un discorso critico costante, chiaro ed articolato che i punti esposti permetterebbero di fissare (sia che se ne condivida o no la formula), emerge inequivocabilmente da questi scritti — pur nella limitatezza del numero — una insospettata competenza professionale e lo scrupoloso senso morale del critico.

Ne deriva la scoperta di un uomo che alla critica — come all'opera creatrice — si accostava con una solida preparazione e quel rigore che egli esigeva e riteneva essenziale per tutti coloro che si ponevano o volevano porsi al servizio dell'arte.

Dalla lettera al figlio Fausto soprattutto, traspare la coscienza di uno spirito libero, disinteressato, desideroso solo di tutelare e avvivare la spontaneità e la libertà del processo creativo, con quella passione e quella tenacia che la grande quanto candida fede nella missione alla quale si sentiva chiamato continuamente alimentava.

Per Pirandello porsi al servizio dell'arte costituiva una ragione d'esistenza.

Sembrerebbe infine legittimo suggerire che una tale attitudine ed un tale metodo non vengano circoscritti semplicemente alle aree dell'argomento specifico, ma possano e debbano estendersi all'intera opera artistica pirandelliana la quale, alla verifica, ne uscirebbe certamente più illuminata ed approfondita.

Lettera di Luigi Pirandello al figlio Fausto.³³

Pordenone 10 VI 1928

Mio caro Fausto,

finalmente Stefano mi comunica il tuo indirizzo e posso rispondere alla tua ultima lettera, che, come puoi bene immaginarti, mi ha afflitto moltissimo.

È curioso come tu, che sai vedere ed esprimere così bene ciò che avviene in te, non trovi poi la via per uscire da codeste opprimenti condizioni di spirito. Perché, quando ti metti a dipingere, guardi con gli occhi degli altri, tu che hai così buoni occhi per guardare in te? Bisogna che tu ti liberi da ogni preoccupazione di modernità e finisca di dipingere come tutti oggi dipingono, cioè brutto. Ho visto a Venezia i Novecentisti: orrori, da un canto, e insulsissima accademia dall'altro; e tutti uguali. È veramente una sconfitta e spaventevole aberrazione, di cui non si vede la fine. Per ritornare ingenui scarabocchiano come ragazzini, per dimostrarsi saputi copiano freddamente e stupidamente. Nessuna sincerità. Sforzi inani. Abborrimento d'ogni naturalezza, d'ogni spontaneo abbandono. E nessuno pensa che l'unico pittore moderno che sia riuscito a fare qualche cosa, a esser *lui*, è stato lo Spadini per quest'unica e semplicissima ragione: che a un certo punto non volle sapere più nulla e s'abbandonò alla gioja di dipingere come vedeva e quel che vedeva. Non c'è altra via, non c'è altra salute che questa. Se la tua sincerità è pensare in un tuo modo particolare, che riesci a esprimere così singolarmente nelle tue lettere, ebbene dipingi questi tuoi pensieri, sarai sincero e ti esprimerai: esprimerai qualche cosa. La sorveglianza critica uccide l'arte. La critica d'arte moderna è micidiale. L'avete tutti nel sangue. Bisogna liberarsene.

Non so che cosa tu voglia fare quest'estate. Sarebbe bene, forse, che tu ritornassi in Italia fino a ottobre o novembre, per poi ritornare a Parigi, se ti piacerà. Ti lascio liberissimo di fare come più ti piace, insomma. Vorrei che fossi tu a prendere le tue decisioni, secondo le tue convenienze e i tuoi umori, senza dipendere dagli altri. Mi va così e faccio così. Sappi approfittare di questa libertà che t'ho donata, d'arte e di vita: è l'unico modo di compensarmi. Vederti così incerto, così malcontento è per me una grande afflizione, come se tu ti dimostrassi ingrato. Se hai bisogno di danaro per partire, non hai che da avvertirlo in tempo e ti sarà mandato.

Crémieux non m'ha più scritto, e non so dirti perciò che cosa realmente pensa di te. Gli ho mandato "La nuova colonia," ho risposto con due lettere ad alcune informazioni che mi chiedeva per la sua tesi di laurea, gli ho parlato dei due libri che mi mandò.

Silenzio di tomba. Digli che mi scriva, indirizzando la lettera a Roma, perchè per tutto questo mese di giugno fino al 2 di luglio sono in "debutti" di uno e due giorni per il Veneto e la Romagna. Avr  certamente da dirti tante cose. E vorrei che mi parlasse di te sinceramente.

Il 2 luglio io sar  a Rimini fino al 15. Dal 15 al 31 a Genova al "Giardino d'Italia"; dal primo agosto al 15 a Viareggio. E l  finir  la Compagnia. Non ho ancora deciso che cosa far  poi. Se vedi Megal o Ferreira d  loro che aspetto con impazienza che mi sappiano dire che cosa hanno concluso per il film, dipendendo dalla loro risposta altre decisioni che dovrei prendere.   vero che, per la risposta, essi hanno preso tempo fino a tutto giugno, ma forse qualche cosa sono in grado di dirti fin d' adesso. Faresti bene ad andarli a cercare: il Megale abita a 121 Rue Lafayette e il Ferreira a 99 Rue de Rome.

Aspetto le tue decisioni, e intanto raccomandandoti di star lieto e col cuore leggero e la mente serena, ti bacio forte forte.

Pap .

NOTE

- 1 Lucio D'Ambra, "Ricordi personali del vicino di casa e di cuore," in *Retroscena*, Palermo, n. 2 (febbraio 1937).
- 2 Virgilio Guzzi, "Pirandello" (Fausto), *Editalia* (Roma, 1976), p. 6.
- 3 Devo l'informazione all'amico Dr. Elio Providenti, a cui sono molto grato per avermi segnalato, tra l'altro, anche l'esistenza dell'autoritratto giovanile del Pirandello.
- 4 Ne fa, tuttavia, alcuni riferimenti l'Andersson. Vedi G. Andersson, *Arte e teoria, Studi sulla poetica del giovane Luigi Pirandello* (Stoccolma, 1966), pp. 103-4.
- 5 Vedi A. Alessio, "Tra pittura e narrativa nella novella pirandelliana," in Atti del 6  Convegno internazionale di studi pirandelliani (Agrigento, 1980). Tale relazione non era tuttavia sfuggita ad Emilio Cecchi che, in una breve nota commemorativa alla quale siamo pervenuti dopo il nostro articolo, diceva: "Seduto davanti al vero, egli analizzava col pennello, per non trovarsi poi a mescolare inconsciamente, quando scriveva, i due processi: della pittura e della letteratura. Forse si trattava, principalmente, d'un metodo d'integrit  letteraria. I dipinti di Luigi Pirandello rivelano un altro dei tanti aspetti nei quali egli cerc  di sorprendere e sviscerare il senso della vita. Dovr  tenerne conto chi si accinga a riprendere, come   necessario, lo studio di questo spirito instancabile e coraggioso." Vedi E. Cecchi, "Luigi Pirandello, Pittore," in *Almanacco letterario Bompiani*, (1938), p. 92.
- 6 Rosso di San Secondo, "Pirandello tra i castagni," in *Almanacco letterario Bompiani* (1938), p. 96.
- 7 C.L., "Luigi Pirandello pittore," in *Noi e il mondo*, supplemento mensile di *La Tribuna* (1 maggio 1924).
- 8 A.F., "Un ritratto a olio dipinto dal Maestro," in *Almanacco letterario Bompiani* (1938), p. 80.

- 9 C.L., op. cit., 316-8.
- 10 C.L., op. cit., 316.
- 11 Luigi Pirandello, "Da uno studio all'altro," in *La Critica*, anno 3, n. 7, (1896), 203.
- 12 Luigi Pirandello, "La galleria Saporetti," in *Natura ed Arte*, Milano, anno VI, n. 17 (1 agosto 1896).
- 13 Luigi Pirandello, "Esposizione di belle Arti in Roma," in *Il giornale di Sicilia* (14 novembre, 1895).
- 14 L.P., "Esposizione di belle Arti in Roma," in *Il giornale di Sicilia* (3 ottobre 1895).
- 15 L.P., "Esposizione di belle Arti in Roma," in *Il giornale di Sicilia* (25 settembre 1895).
- 16 L.P., "La galleria Saporetti," op. cit.
- 17 L.P., "Esposizione di belle Arti in Roma," in *Il giornale di Sicilia* (17 settembre 1895).
18. L.P., "La galleria Saporetti," op. cit.,
- 19 Ibid.
- 20 L.P., "Esposizione di belle Arti in Roma," in *Il giornale di Sicilia* (7 dicembre 1895).
- 21 L.P., "Esposizione di belle Arti in Roma," in *Il giornale di Sicilia* (23 ottobre 1895).
- 22 Ibid.
- 23 L.P., "Esposizione di belle Arti in Roma," in *Il giornale di Sicilia* (14 novembre 1895).
- 24 L.P., "Da uno studio all'altro," op. cit. p. 207.
- 25 L.P., "Pittura e scultura," in *Rassegna settimanale universale* (Roma, 3 maggio 1896), 5.
- 26 L.P., "Esposizione di belle Arti in Roma," in *Il giornale di Sicilia* (3 ottobre 1895).
- 27 L.P., "Esposizione di belle Arti in Roma," in *Il giornale di Sicilia* (25 settembre 1895).
- 28 L.P., "Esposizione di belle Arti in Roma," in *Il giornale di Sicilia* (3 ottobre 1895).
- 29 L.P., "Esposizione di belle Arti in Roma," in *Il giornale di Sicilia* (25 settembre 1895).
- 30 L.P., "Esposizione di belle Arti in Roma," in *Il giornale di Sicilia* (1 dicembre 1895).
- 31 L.P., "Esposizione di belle Arti in Roma," in *Il giornale di Sicilia* (25 settembre 1895).
- 32 L.P., "Esposizione di belle Arti in Roma," in *Il giornale di Sicilia* (3 ottobre 1895).
- 33 Ibid.
- 34 Ringrazio l'avv. Pierluigi Pirandello, figlio del pittore Fausto, per avermene permesso la pubblicazione e per lasciarmi prendere visione di alcuni dipinti.

GIOVANNI CECCHETTI. *Giovanni Verga*. Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1978. Pp. 172.

Giovanni Cecchetti's book, *Giovanni Verga*, is an interesting and informative survey of all the works of the best author of the Italian *verismo* movement. Cecchetti states in the Preface that there are only a small number of books about Verga written in English and none really give an exhaustive picture of Verga's literary contributions. Cecchetti feels that his book fills this gap. *Giovanni Verga* is divided into six chapters each one being dedicated to the presentation and analysis of a work or series of works (novels, short stories or plays). These are grouped together according to a chronological criterion which sets as major focal points the publications of *I Malavoglia* (1881) and of *Mastro don Gesualdo* (1889).

The first chapter takes into account the novels and short stories published between 1877 and 1880, usually considered as the work of a young and artistically immature Verga. In general novels such as *Storia di una capinera*, *Eva*, *Eros* and *Tigre reale* are judged as failures and cannot be considered of great artistic value. The structure of the novels is weak and the storyliners are conventional. Cecchetti does, however, spare some individual characters as, for example, *Eva* and *Nedda*. He seems to follow the traditional view point which considers *Nedda* as a transition piece between Verga's romantic and *verista* period, warning however that such a dichotomous analysis must not be exaggerated. He does underline that there is one constant factor in all of Verga's early prose: that is, the desire to portray reality and man's passions as they really are, without hypocrisy or artifice.

The second and third chapters take into account the works which are usually considered to represent the height of Verga's talent. Cecchetti discusses briefly *il verismo*, concluding that this school was a byproduct of the mingling of two French movements, *realism* and *naturalism*. The critic then studies Verga's new language as best exemplified in *I Malavoglia*. A natural result of this language is that the characters seem to narrate themselves without the help of an author, and this is a major achievement towards the representation of reality as it truly is. According to Cecchetti, "L'amante di Gramigna" is evidence of the birth of this original language which paves the way for the "interior monologue" of modern literature.

Cecchetti then focuses his attention on the stories of *Vita dei campi* and on *I Malavoglia*. After a summary of the "novelle"'s plot, he critically appraises each one. He considers *I Malavoglia* as Verga's successful attempt at "creating the perfect novel" (p. 96). The style, the language, Verga's ability to disappear from the narration, to let the story evolve from the dialogue, to let the characters themselves relate their own interior motivations, are all reasons which prompt the critic to call *I Malavoglia* an artistic masterpiece and the precursor of a new literary tradition.

The fourth chapter discusses all the works published between *I Malavoglia* and *Mastro don Gesualdo*. Most of these unfold in a bourgeois milieu and seem to lack the vitality, preciseness and originality of Verga's best efforts. Only

Novelle rusticane positively reflect Verga's artistic capabilities. The characters accept with stoicism and resignation their destiny and exemplify Verga's pessimism, his dark and bitter humour.

The fifth chapter is dedicated to *Mastro don Gesualdo*. This novel vividly and effectively depicts the economic greed which spurs man on to continue his quest for riches and the power which these riches bestow. Verga examines with extraordinary coherence the isolation produced by greed, ambition and the inability to communicate and understand one another. Cecchetti states, however, that the weakness and length of the second half of the second part of the novel does not permit him to consider it as artistically equal to *I Malavoglia*.

The final chapter rapidly analyses the works which belong to the last years of Verga's literary activity, and is aptly titled "Twilight." In general, Cecchetti gives a negative appraisal of these efforts, although he does consider that some "novelle" of *Don Candeloro & Cie* possess a high degree of artistic quality, and all the tales of this series develop a single theme: life is a comedy of errors in which all men are actors.

In conclusion, *Giovanni Verga* is a very precise and complete survey of the author's works. Cecchetti's style is clear and concise. This results in a straightforward and easily understood analysis of Verga's novels, his ideas and his artistic concepts. The exhaustiveness of Cecchetti's review does not permit him to linger or penetrate analitically each of Verga's publications. He does, however, capture the essence and presents the major critical elements of each work. Cecchetti readily and successfully fulfills his goal of acquainting the English-speaking readers with one of Italy's major novelists.

ENRICA ROSSETTI

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ENZO LAURETTA. *Luigi Pirandello, Storia di un personaggio "fuori di chiave."* Milano: Mursia, 1980. Pp. 322.

A un primo sguardo d'insieme, questo libro del Lauretta potrebbe dare l'erronea impressione del centone. A chi, poi, tenga alla severità e sobrietà della forma, quei tanti capitoletti in cui è suddiviso il libro, taluni dal titolo debile (*C'era una volta . . . salute precaria*), potrebbero anche fare arricciare il naso. Bastano poche pagine per ricredersi subito.

Non ci si imbatte nella ennesima raccolta o ricupero o riciclaggio di dati e interpretazioni arcinote, ma in una meditata ristrutturazione dell'apparato umano-artistico del Pirandello, il che porta a giustificare il titolo, originale ed illuminante, del libro.

Il Lauretta a cui spetta il merito, qualora ancora non si sapesse, di essere l'ideatore dell'annuale congresso internazionale pirandelliano che da sette anni si tiene puntualmente e con grande successo ad Agrigento, ha tracciato in questo suo nuovo libro, un disegno preciso, chiaro e serrato della formazione artistica del Pirandello indicandone le linee di sviluppo. È un testo critico che parte dall'analisi storico-umana, non storia romanzata.

Né deve stupire se delle trecentoventidue pagine in cui si prende in esame l'intera opera pirandelliana, solo le ultime venti vengono riservate al dramma-turgo. Il Lauretta si prefigge di cogliere la storia di un uomo che si fa nello stesso tempo personaggio, di stabilire la strettissima relazione esistente tra l'uomo e l'opera nel suo farsi.

Corregionale del Pirandello, il Lauretta ha ovviamente le carte più valide per cogliere, dell'anima siciliana, gli elementi più peculiari e sfuggenti. Il suo scopo, è evidente, è quello di capire il Pirandello prima ancora di interpretarlo. I primi due capitoli, sull'"habitat" e sul "tempo" sono quanto di meglio sia stato scritto sull'argomento.

L'opera pirandelliana ne esce, infine, compatta, dalla iniziale produzione poetica, giustamente recuperata, fino all'opera drammatica. Di conseguenza ne risulta capovolta l'opinione tuttora carezzata da molta critica di un Pirandello sbocconcato, bizzarro, soggetto all'ispirazione momentanea.

Nulladimeno, se da una parte si sostiene la ricollegabilità dell'opera ad una ben unitaria coscienza critica, non se ne determinano nemmeno i confini. Il Lauretta esclude così la conclusione della parabola pirandelliana con i *Sei personaggi*:

Con i *Sei personaggi* lo scrittore agrigentino capiva che, malgrado tutto, nonostante i suoi sforzi, per costruire una scena nuova, il personaggio non vi si adattava né vi si trovavano a coesistere ideologia e tecnica drammatica nuove: per viva e per quanto fluida potesse sembrare, quella vita era pur sempre irretita in uno schema letterario: proprio questa riflessione lo condusse alla persuasione di risolvere la tensione del personaggio e della sua vicenda, liberandola nello 'spirito della favola.'

Se Pirandello stesso, insomma, sosteneva che la vita non conclude e se non conclude è segno che non deve concludere e che vano è dunque cercare una conclusione, anche il suo teatro deve conseguentemente rimanere disponibile a spazi nuovi, rimanere, in altri termini, un'opera aperta.

Anche se nel disegno il testo non si prefigge di essere rigorosamente saggistico (il che può spiegare la mancanza di riferimenti ad alcune citazioni) lo consideriamo fondamentale. È un testo di cui sarebbe auspicabile ed opportuna la traduzione in altre lingue.

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GIUSI ODDO DE STEFANIS. *Bassani entro il cerchio delle sue mura*. Ravenna: Long Editore, 1981. Pp. 271.

Come il titolo stesso suggerisce, in *Bassani entro il cerchio delle sue mura* la De Stefanis — in una interpretazione alquanto complessiva — intende mettere a fuoco come la città di Ferrara è stata in essenza l'elemento unificatore dell'intera narrativa di Giorgio Bassani. E non c'è dubbio, come leggiamo per

altro dal risvolto di copertina, che il saggio segue attentamente dalle *Storie Ferraresi* all'*Odore del fieno* la parabola "della maturazione interiore dell'autore, che passa dalla polemica storico-sociale della prima opera ad una crisi individuale e infine al superamento della crisi stessa." Aggiungiamo subito che quel che colpisce il lettore sin dalle prime pagine (oltre alla chiarezza) è la maniera diretta (un'ovvia indicazione del sentirsi padrone della materia trattata) in cui vengono affermate, e poi ampiamente sviluppate, alcune posizioni su certi leitmotiv bassaniani quali: la funzione della memoria, il rapporto presente-passato-storia, la dimensione introspettiva e autobiografica della voce narrativa, la problematica del personaggio ebraico, i rapporti ambigui di colpevolezza e innocenza; i temi di masochismo, vittimismo, persecuzione, dolore e fatalismo; la tendenza all'isolamento e incomunicabilità; il senso della morte; la scrittura come confessione (auto-analisi) e strumento catartico; e il dramma individuale come rispecchiamento di una condizione esistenziale di un'intera comunità o società. Nel presentare la propria posizione critica su questi ed altri motivi e schemi tipici di Bassani, la De Stefanis spesso non esita a distinguersi dalla critica di Grillandi, Ferretti, e Volpini (tanto per citare i primi nomi che vengono in mente) specialmente quando si è parlato dell'impegno ideologico di Bassani o quando si sono accennati degli echi proustiani. Il saggio è così ben documentato sia dalle pagine dell'opera di Bassani sia dalle pagine della critica generale (ottima, a nostro avviso, è la scelta degli abbondanti riferimenti agli scritti di R. Girard — soprattutto per quanto riguarda la struttura triadica, l'elemento di mediazione, l'inseguimento del desiderio) che è difficile non apprezzare, anche se non si è sempre d'accordo (per esempio, con i riferimenti a Robbe-Grillet), tanto l'impegno dell'autrice nell'aver seguito molto da vicino la narrativa di Bassani quanto la sua franchezza — nel trattare — senza fare della psicoanalisi selvaggia — dei motivi che rivelano il carattere privato e psicologico dell'autore (dopo tutto buona parte dell'opera bassaniana è un "sondaggio entro il proprio-Io").

Partendo dalla struttura (labirintica?) della città di Ferrara con le sue mura, i suoi vicoli, le piazze e gli edifici, ecc. (si pensi subito alla struttura delle scatole cinesi ne *Il giardino dei Finzi-Contini*: Muro-giardino-giardino nel giardino-Magna Domus-corridoio-camera-l'impenetrabile linguaggio e stato d'animo di Micol), l'intera parabola narrativa di Bassani viene esaminata nel suo delinearsi nella configurazione circolare che si racchiude in se stessa, ma non prima di poter offrire all'autore la verità che egli cercava. Con lucida visione unitaria la De Stefanis ritraccia il percorso da *Le storie ferraresi* a *Il giardino dei Finzi-Contini* indicando le varie tappe nel tentato recupero della memoria (e non del tempo) nella Storia man mano che l'autore si avvicina sempre di più all'auto-analisi del proprio-Io. Di particolare rilievo troviamo il capitolo su *Il giardino dei Finzi-Contini* dove i principali simboli e motivi bassaniani vengono analizzati con penetrante attenzione. Pur insistendo un po' troppo sul ruolo di Micol nella sua missione di guida come una Beatrice e come Concezione (di *Conversazione in Sicilia*) la De Stefanis coglie nel segno nella sua interpretazione della "favola allegorica" e della "struttura metaforica" di questo romanzo chiave. All'autrice non sono sfuggiti quei personaggi, come Bruno Lattes, che riappaiono nell'opera di Bassani un po' alla Balzac. Con altrettanta acume critico la De Stefanis passa alla "svolta definitiva della convivenza e identificazione fra narratore e scrittore" in *Dietro la porta* e *L'airone*, e infine esamina l'"involutione finale" ne *L'odore del fieno* e *Dentro le mura* dove Bassani sembra finalmente uscire "dall'inquietudine della sua lunga ricerca" del priorio-io. Il penoso e lungo viaggio — come strumento di indagine (e a volte di polemica) termina con quel

che l'autore stesso ha definito una "liberazione." Liberazione indispensabile al lavoro di lima o di rifacimento (come per le storie "Il muro di cinta" e "In esilio") mentre Bassani raccoglie l'intera sua narrativa e la ripropone ai lettori con il simbolico titolo *Il romanzo di Ferrara*. La cosiddetta "liberazione" concede quella distanza estetica e critica (quel "distanziamento prospettico") che, come nota la De Stefanis, permette a Bassani di allontanarsi abbastanza dalla scena per far sí che il dramma dei personaggi non venga più visto come dramma individuale; e quindi lascia che "i fatti diventino patrimonio della coscienza collettiva."

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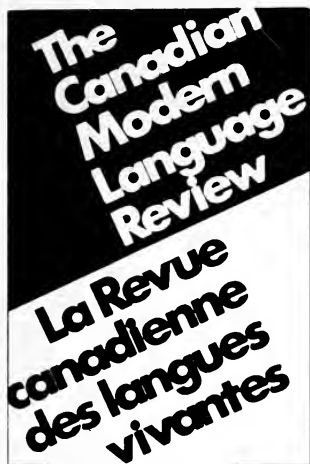
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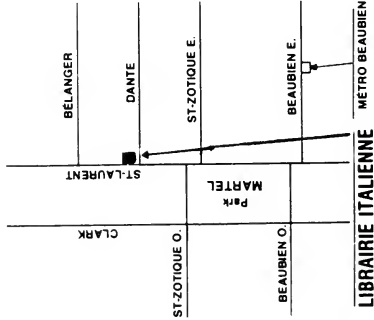
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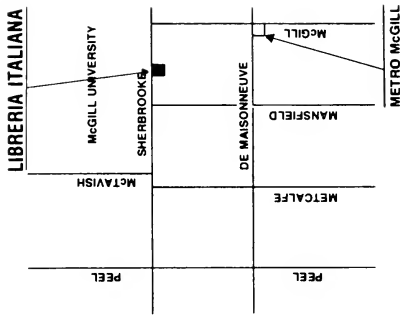


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